

Ambix

The Journal of the Society for the
Study of Alchemy and Early Chemistry

Members of Council

DENIS I. DUVEEN, Esq. Prof. D. MCKIE (*Chairman*)

Prof. R. J. FORBES Prof. J. READ, F.R.S.

D. GEOGHEGAN, Esq. (*Hon. Editor*) Dr. W. A. SMEATON (*Hon. Secretary*)

Dr. F. W. Gibbs (*Hon. Secretary*) Dr. H. E. STAPLETON

G. HEYM, Esq. (*Hon. Foreign Sec.*) Prof. LYNN THORNDIKE

Dr. E. ASHWORTH UNDERWOOD

VOL. VIII

OCTOBER, 1960

No. 3

PARACELSUS AND THE NEOPLATONIC AND GNOSTIC TRADITION

BY WALTER PAGEL*

INTRODUCTION

EVEN a casual glance at the voluminous works of Theophrastus Paracelsus (1493-1541) cannot fail to show that his contributions lay in many fields: in medicine and chemistry, in mineralogy and meteorology, in epistemology and the knowledge of man as part of the cosmos, in theology and *magia naturalis* including alchemy, astrology and divination. It is not difficult to extract from his work a number of observations and results that can be regarded as stepping-stones in the development of science and medicine. What is not so easy is the demonstration of the link which joins these progressive views and findings with the non-scientific ideas and sentiments with which the *Corpus* of the Paracelsian writings abounds. The proto-scientific as well as the non-scientific parts are products of the same mind and of the same cultural climate—the era of the Renaissance. One of its outstanding features was the revival of Hellenistic philosophy—the doctrines of the mythical Hermes Trismegistos and of neo-Platonism. Associated with this revival there was the attempt at reconciling it with Christian doctrine, whereby belief seemed to acquire support through philosophical and symbolical knowledge—a new type of *Gnosis*. Paracelsus was bound to reflect these general trends of his era. Indeed

* 58, Millway, London, N.W.7.

"Hermetic" and neo-Platonic speculation as well as Christian belief and symbolism can be recognized in his philosophy without much difficulty, and it has often been said that Paracelsus was influenced by these trends of thought. The detailed examination of this point, however, does not seem to have had sufficient attention, nor has its possible role as a link between the scientific and non-scientific part of the work of Paracelsus been appreciated so far. On the other hand there is a danger of overrating these influences and of overlooking the original way in which Paracelsus made use of traditional lore, and the distinct differences that exist between his ideas and those of Hellenistic philosophy and symbolism. Such differences have been rightly pointed out—we shall discuss them below. The extensive application of speculative and symbolic elements and their association with the faithful observation of nature alone mark Paracelsus out as an original and indeed as a unique figure. Yet a study of his parallels and contacts with the Hermetic tradition is still called for and likely to help in the understanding of Paracelsus—disposing eventually of the unsatisfactory cliché of the "two souls" of Doctor Faustus that has been applied to him far too often.

In the present paper no more can be given than a first sketchy collection of doctrines that appear to be characteristic of Hermeticism, neo-Platonism and Gnosticism and to have found access to the Paracelsian *Corpus*. They will be discussed in the light of their significance for Paracelsus' own natural philosophy and medicine.

BASIC IDEAS CHARACTERISTIC OF GNOSTICISM AND NEO-PLATONISM MATTER AND SPIRIT

Gnosticism may be said to present basically a dualist view of the world. In it the dark waters of the material world are set in sharp contrast against spirit, soul and divinity. The former owes its existence to the fall of a lesser deity and embodies original evil as opposed to good. This dualistic idea is symbolized and illustrated in the Gnostic diagrams of the Cosmos. Here we see our world surrounded by detachments of evil forces, the *archons* or *demiurges* who formed it in the abyss of the waters, the *chaos* that was uncreated and aboriginal. It is through the circle formed by the *archons* that the divine element in us, the soul, has to grope its way back to its divine source after death. Knowledge of certain watchwords will enable it to do so—a knowledge that is furnished by the *Gnostic Magus*, by *pneumatic* man who vanquishes the forces of evil and leads the soul to the heights in which divinity dwells¹.

¹ W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, Göttingen, 1907, pp. 361 seq. H. Leisegang, *Dante und das christliche Weltbild* (Schriften d. Deutschen Dante-Ges. Heft 6), Weimar, 1941, p. 17; pp. 21–26. G. Verbeke, *L'Évolution de la Doctrine du Pneuma du Stoïcisme à St Augustin*, Paris et Louvain, 1945, pp. 287 seq.: Les Gnostiques.

Though probably inspired by oriental, notably Persian concepts, Gnostic dualism is essentially informed by Platonic *idealism*. It was Plato who appeared to a Father of the Church as the "Patriarch of the Gnostics", and Gnosticism stood for "Christian Platonism"². The distinction that had been fundamental in Platonic theory, as notably propounded in the *Timaeus*³, was between that which *is* and never *develops* on the one hand, and that which *develops* and *is not* on the other, between archetype and image, between *Eidos* and *Eidolon*, between the eternal world of the Ideas and the world of fugitive shadows and appearances that is ours.

Similarly neo-Platonism adhered to this basic dualistic view. Yet it emphasized at the same time the principle of continuity in the cosmos. To uphold it meant to bridge the dualistic gulf somehow. This was achieved by a closed system of emanations leading from the highest divinity down to coarse matter, to stone, metal and dirt. Intermediate beings had to be introduced. One such intermediary—a "*tertium quid*"—is the *astral body*. It is a *Pneuma*, i.e. of finest ethereal corporality, enveloping the soul proper which is not a "*Pneuma*", as it is immaterial⁴. Maintaining soul to be purely spiritual and

² See L. Noack, *Philosophie-Geschichtliches Lexikon. Historisch-biographisches Handbuch zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, Leipzig, 1879, p. 314 sub: *Gnostiker* and with reference to Tertullian.

³ *Timaeus* 27C–29D. Prelude. The Nature and Scope of Physics. Quoted from F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology. The Timaeus of Plato translated with a running commentary*, London, 1937, pp. 21 et seq.

⁴ No more than a casual reference can be inserted as to the parallels with Eastern speculation, notably that of the *Taoists* who can claim our special interest because of their significance for Chinese alchemy. As Joseph Needham writes, they "recognized a considerable number of spiritual essences, even godlings, in the human body-soul complex, almost as many indeed as the limbs and viscera of the human organism itself, but there was no place other than earth for them to inhabit as a coherent entity, and after death they simply dispersed, some rising to join the *pneuma* (*chhi*) of the heavens, some sinking to mingle with that of the earth, and others disappearing altogether". *Elixir Poisoning in Mediaeval China*. *Janus* 1959, XLVIII, p. 245. See also *idem* in: *Science and Civilization in China*, Cambridge, 1954 et seq., Vol. II, pp. 153, 333 and 490. "At death the three *hun* souls rose up to mingle with the universal *pneuma* in the empyrean, while the seven *pho* souls sank down to mingle with the material of the earth. The *hun* souls were connected with the *chhi*, or *pneuma*, the *pho* souls were connected with the seminal essence, the *ching*, and the *hsüeh*, or blood . . . —a polypsychical ideology . . . in the development of Chinese philosophical organicism. . . . Of course, whether there could be the slightest connexion between these old Chinese ideas and the neo-Platonic traditions in the West, he would be a very bold man who would attempt to say". (J. Needham in a personal communication to the present author of 3 November, 1958.) See also: H. Steininger, *Hauch- und Körperseele und der Dämon bei Kuan-Yin-Tze*, Leipzig, 1953.

immaterial, neo-Platonism made its stand against Stoic Monism and Materialism—in this the soul had been visualized as a *Pneuma*, a breath of finest corporality⁵.

The soul receives its envelope or vehicle (*ochema*) or “chariot” when passing downwards through the stars and returns it to the latter when after death it retraces its steps to achieve reunion with divinity. It belongs to the stars, it is truly an *astral body*⁶. Its position as a being intermediate between spirit and body was best expressed by Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) who said that it was not body and almost soul, and not soul and almost body⁷. This neo-Platonic thesis in its Ficinian formulation can be regarded as a doctrine fundamental to Renaissance philosophy. It was verbally repeated by Agrippa of Nettesheim (1487–1535)⁸ and introduced into the works of many others.

The astral body was one of the means by which neo-Platonism preserved its basic dualistic attitude without sacrificing the idea of cosmic continuity, coherence and unity⁹. “Steps” with innumerable transitions lead from God, the One, down to matter which forms the last and lowest step. As such, matter is still spiritual, although disguised by a thick material cover. Nature as a whole is seen as a “sleeping spirit”. In its realm, Being and Action perform the task that is given to Contemplation in the realm of the spirit¹⁰. The individual object in nature exists not by virtue of its coarse material body, but by its spiritual kernel, the spark that is invisible to the eye. It is the latter that gives the object its specific form and schedule of function; indeed it is the vector of specificity. This commanding role of the spirit makes possible the

⁵ F. Rüsche, *Das Seelenpneuma. Seine Entwicklung von der Hauchseele zur Geistseele. Beiträge zur Geschichte d. antiken Pneumalehre* (Stud. z. Geschichte und Kultur d. Altertums XVIII, 3), Paderborn, 1933, p. 55.

⁶ See E. R. Dodds in: *Proclus, The Elements of Theology. Revised Text with translation, introduction and commentary*, Oxford, 1933, Appendix II: *The Astral Body in neo-Platonism*, p. 313.

⁷ Marsilius Ficinus, *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*, lib. III, cap. 3, Venetiis. Aldus. 1516, fol. 153r. To this: D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, London, The Warburg Institute, 1958, pp. 38 seq.

⁸ Agrippa a Nettesheim, *De Occulta Philosophia*, lib. I, cap. 14, Lugd. 1550, p. 33.

⁹ Verbeke, *loc. cit.*, 1945, p. 364.

¹⁰ In natura quidem intueri nihil aliud est quam esse tale et tale quiddam facere. Ficinus commenting on Plotinus, *Ennead*, III, 8, 1 *et seq.*, Basileae, 1615, pp. 339 *et seq.* In Nature to contemplate is nothing but to be something and to do something.—Nature as a “sleeping spirit”: W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, London, 1918, vol. I, p. 152, quoting from Schelling.

instantaneous *conversion* of an impulse of the spirit, or will, into material change.

Man, too, is an intermediate being. His body partakes of the divine spark of light. Hence he is a *microcosm*. For in him all constituents of the world are represented: heaven in his spirit and soul, and the dark abyss of the waters of matter in his body. He was created to replace the world of Lucifer and his fellow angels who had sunk into the abyss of matter completely. Through the creation of man the spark of divine light was saved, for it had been possessed by the evil principle who arrogated divinity to himself. In contrast to him, man is eligible for redemption¹¹.

In man, therefore, that cosmic duality is reflected which is caused by the independence of original matter. This is uncreated and hence coordinated to God. There is, however, a struggle between them, the ultimate outcome of which is redemption, the victory of light over darkness. In this sense the early Platonist Numenius of Apamea (2nd century A.D.) had said that the souls adhere to the original water that is animated by the breath of God¹². Hence there is traffic between the upper world of the spirit and the lower world of matter—a process with the uniform aim of redemption—redemption that is of the soul from the fetters of matter and of the spiritual spark that can be found hidden in matter everywhere. Thus the *Opus* of the *alchemist* is dedicated to such redemption as the perfection of metals will afford. To be successful, the process in the furnace must be accompanied by a corresponding purification of the soul of the worker. Hence the close relationship between Alchemy, Gnosticism and neo-Platonism, not only in Hellenistic times, but

¹¹ According to Origen, *De Principiis*, I, 7, 4, God created the world in order to ban the fallen spirits into material bodies. See also: F. Ch. Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religionsphilosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Tübingen, 1835, pp. 173–175 (Fall of Sophia) and p. 591, with reference to Böhme's *Aurora*, 16, 75; 14, 62; *Drei Prinzipien*, 10, 8; 10, 11.—The idea was poignantly expressed by the Paracelsist Oswald Croll (1580–1609) in the introduction to his *Basilica Chymica* of 1608: "God created man that the number and losse of the rebellious Angells might be made up in the kingdome of Heaven". *Philosophy reformed in four tractates* translated by H. Pinell, London, 1657, p. 54. See W. Pagel, *Paracelsus. Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance*, Basle and New York, 1958, p. 207. See also: H. J. Sheppard, *Gnosticism and Alchemy*, Ambix, 1957, VI, 86–101 (p. 92: the material world coming into being through the fall and activity of a lesser deity). *Idem*, *The Redemption Theme and Hellenistic Alchemy*, *Ibid.*, 1959, VII, 42.

¹² "Prosizanein to hydati tas psychas theopnoi onto" Numenius in Porphyry *Antrum Nympharum* cap. 10. See: M. Joel, *Blicke in die Religionsgeschichte*, Breslau, 1880, vol. I, pp. 164–165.

also throughout the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance¹³. Finally liberation from disease—*medicine*—involves redemption—the conquest of the evil that attacks man in the form of disease seeds and disease demons. These invade the body, breaking up its organic simplicity and coherence by introducing corruption, whereby the parts are forced back into the realm of dead and dark matter.

Alchemy and Medicine thus form two aspects of natural *magic* already in Hellenistic times. The Magus applies the principle of *sympathy*: everywhere like yearns to unite with like. This principle derives from the Platonic correspondences between archetype and image, the world of magisterial and “sophic” models and patterns on the one hand, and that of empirical objects on the other. One technique used by the magus is to shut up a *pneuma* or demoniac or astral force in a cameo (gem, *gamaheu*) or in a ring or in an animal. By capturing a virtue in this way the Magus is able to unite it with a corresponding constituent in his own body and thereby achieves concrete effects in the outside world. In this also lies his *mantic* power of divination. It is due to a traffic between spirits. The “seat” of magic, however, should not be searched for in the Magus, for it lies in Nature in which as by a magic chain everything is interconnected and alive. It is the task of the Magus to adapt himself to Nature so closely that he can influence it by setting, as it were, a sympathetic chord into vibration¹⁴.

By virtue of their spiritual character the effective and active powers in this world are *Logoi*—it is these which persist and assume corporality in the form of the *Semina*. Each living being develops from a hidden seed. It eventually perishes, but not without having formed new seed. Owing to this *cyclic*—*circular*—process the individual survives by transmitting the specificity of his breed to succeeding generations. The association of seed with *Logos* originates

¹³ M. Berthelot, *Introduction à l'étude de la Chimie des Anciens et du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1889, pp. 247 et seq.; p. 235. *Idem*, *Les Origines de l'Alchimie*, Paris, 1885, p. 76; p. 272: “Le but de la philosophie, c'est la dissolution des corps (materiels) et la séparation de l'âme du corps” (with ref. to Stephanus, *De magna et sacra arte*, lib. I, ed. J. L. Ideeler, in: *Physici et medici Graeci minores*, vol. II, Berol, 1842, p. 215). *Ibid.*, p. 165; Soul as prime matter of things, *ibid.*, pp. 252, 276. E. O. von Lippmann, *Entstehung und Ausbreitung der Alchemie*, Berlin, 1919, pp. 319, 323, 324, 376, 381. On Gnosticism and Alchemy, pp. 235–247. R. P. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermes Trismégiste*, I: *L'Astrologie et les Sciences Occultes*, Paris, 1950, pp. 217–282.

¹⁴ Verbeke, *loc. cit.*, 1945, pp. 326–330, referring to A. Dieterich, *Abraxas*, Leipzig, 1891, p. 58. H. Ritter, *Picatrix, ein arabisches Handbuch hellenistischer Magie. Vorträge d. Bibliothek Warburg*, 1921–1922, Leipzig u. Berlin, 1923, pp. 94–124 (particularly p. 106). Of older sources see: I. Gaffarel, *Curiositez inoyyes sur la sculpture talismanique des Persans, Horoscope des Patriarches, et lecture des estoilles*, Paris, 1629, pp. 94 et seq.

in the Stoic concept of the *Logoi Spermatikoi*—the seed-bound rational impulses and directions. This concept reflects the Monism of the Stoic School. The world is the original *Pneuma*, the original *Logos* out of which the individual beings arise—each embodying a *Logos*. This idea was partly accepted by neo-Platonism¹⁵.

Neo-Platonism radically altered the status of *Time* in philosophy. Aristotle had defined it as the number that measures motion—thereby degrading it to the rank of a merely conventional aid for the mind. By contrast Plotinus vindicated Time as a power existing in reality—namely that power which makes motion possible. This he achieved by associating time with soul—the soul of the world as well as the soul of the individual. Time thus becomes the instrument by means of which eternity acquires a hold on the cosmos. Owing to its link with soul, time assumes a *qualitative* character. It is no longer a mere measure of quantity, but is determined by the differences between individual processes and actions¹⁶.

NEO-PLATONIC AND GNOSTIC TRENDS IN THE SPECULATION OF PARACELSUS. THE SPIRIT AND THE ASTRAL BODY. THE LIGHT OF NATURE

Are there any traces of these neo-Platonic and Gnostic ideas in Paracelsus, and if so, how did he develop them and what answers did he give to the problems which they raised?

According to Paracelsus man is the lesser world, for in him all things of the greater world are united—they do not, however, enter the organism as bodies, but in the form of “spirits”, i.e. as powers and virtues¹⁷.

In this, Paracelsus expresses the idea fundamental to him that what really interests the “philosopher” is the invisible world of the “occult” virtues that are celestial and “astral”, the world of the spirit and “*Logoi*”. Unmasking all material beings and actions as the product of spiritual forces, he implements

¹⁵ H. Meyer, *Geschichte der Lehre von den Keimkräften von der Stoa bis zum Ausgang der Patristik*, Bonn, 1914, pp. 13 et seq., p. 64 and *passim*.

¹⁶ H. Leisegang, *Die Begriffe der Zeit und Ewigkeit im späteren Platonismus*. Beitr. z. *Gesch. d. Philos. d. Mittelalt.* ed. C. Baeumker, vol. XIII, no. 4, Münster, 1913. J. F. Callaghan, *Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1948. W. Pagel, *Van Helmont De Tempore and Biological Time*, *Osiris*, 1949, vol. VIII, pp. 346–417. H. Weiss, *Notes on the Greek Ideas referred to in Van Helmont's De Tempore*, *Osiris*, *ibid.*, pp. 419–449. W. Pagel, *The Reaction to Aristotle in XVIIth century Biological Thought*. In: *Science, Medicine and History*, Oxford, 1953, vol. I, pp. 493–494.

¹⁷ Man a microcosm “not in form and matter, but by possessing all the powers and virtues of the greater world”. *Bücher von den unsichtbaren Krankheiten* (1531/32), Ingang des vierten Buches, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, pp. 308–309.

one of the basic postulates of neo-Platonism. Indeed, Paracelsus follows this up in detail in his pathology. What is visible as a pathological change in the organs is the product of an interaction between two spirits: the spiritual cause of the disease which enters the body from outside and the spiritual representative of the body or the organ invaded. This is not attacked directly and physically, but in a more subtle way. It is alienated from its normal functional schedule which is controlled by a spiritual "director", the *Archeus*. "The spirits know each other . . . they speak the same language . . . now suffers the body . . . not in a material way, but from the spirit which calls for a spiritual remedy"¹⁸." Diseases are therefore not "*Corpora*, hence spirit should be used against spirit"¹⁹. Disease is thus seen as a product of the inter-communication of spirits—a feature with which we are familiar from Gnostic and neo-Platonic speculation.

The neo-Platonic emphasis laid on the Invisible and Spiritual leads Paracelsus to take special interest in fugitive and "pneumatic" substances and phenomena in nature. The *Arcana*, the uncreated, divine and miraculously powerful agents, are represented as volatile. They are directed by the *Astra* like "feathers in the wind"²⁰. Paracelsus visualizes a spirit in each "essential thing", and hence as many spirits as individuals and objects in nature²¹. It is these spirits that endow things with "life", i.e. form and function. For "life is a spiritual, invisible and impalpable thing"²². It is the same spirit which makes inert material chemically reactive which renders it "male" ("männisch")²³.

"Spirit" used in this sense by Paracelsus has nothing to do with reason (*ratio*) and is particularly alien to Aristotelian and formal logic. What he

¹⁸ The spirits know each other . . .: *Volumen Paramirum* (De Ente spirituali), ed. Sudhoff, vol. I, pp. 217–218.

¹⁹ Diseases are not *Corpora* . . .: *Paragranum*, tract. II (Von der Astronomey), ed. Sudhoff, vol. VIII, p. 178.

²⁰ *Arcana* directed by *Astra* like feathers in the wind: *Paragranum*, tract. III (Von der alchimia), ed. Sudhoff, vol. VIII, p. 185.

²¹ A spirit in each "essential thing": *De Natura Rerum*, lib. IV, de vita rer. natur., ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, pp. 329–330.

²² "The life of each object is a spiritual, an invisible and incomprehensible being, and a spirit and a spiritual thing". *Die neun Bucher de natura rerum* (Villach, 1537). Lib. IV *De Vita rerum natural*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, p. 329.

²³ Spirit making inert material active ("männisch"): sulphur by ignition, mercury by sublimation and salt by resolution—the latter producing a spirit (vitrioli, tartari, aluminis, nitri) with impetuosity ("Ungestümigkeit"). *Opus Paramirum*, lib. I, cap. 3, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, p. 52.

means are the deeper strata of the personality, the sphere of will and wilful imagination. "What lives according to its will, lives in the spirit; what lives according to reason, lives against the spirit"²⁴. Will and imagination are closely linked with what Paracelsus calls the "*Light of Nature*". This embraces all phenomena and things which—though invisible—are accessible to our search and understanding—unlike things divine which are not. More particularly it is the specific form and function of an individual tending towards a specific goal, its *Entelecheia*, which belongs to the "*Light of Nature*". This in turn is subjected to the world of the Astra and the soul of the world. The "light of nature is a pupil of the Holy Spirit"²⁵; man receives its teaching in dreams when nature in him speaks to itself. Here again we encounter the traffic between spirits.

The Paracelsian "spirit" in many respects corresponds to the neo-Platonic chariot or vehicle (*ochema*) or envelope of the soul. It is the *sidereal*, the *astral* body. Through it the stars confer on man "all kind of worldly (perishable) wisdom and art". It is wisdom concerned with nature ("*naturliche Vernunft*") which is here contrasted with eternal wisdom²⁶. But through it man gains some though inadequate access to eternal wisdom, for there is a correspondence between them. It is finally the astral body, and not his coarse and visible material body, that elevates man over the other creatures. God gave it to the star and from it to man²⁷.

THE PASSIONS OF THE SOUL AND INSANITY

There is, however, another astral gift which is transferred to man in his astral body: the emotions and passions. Temperament is also an astral gift²⁸. It operates not as the ancients believed through the visible humours, but through invisible inclination. It is a spiritual effect that emerges in divination and dreams.

²⁴ Reason versus spirit: *Volumen Paramirum*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. I, pp. 217–218.

²⁵ *Light of Nature*—a pupil of the Holy Spirit: *Fragm. de Fundam. Sapientiae*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, p. 325.

²⁶ The *astral body* conferring "*naturliche Vernunft*": *Philosophia sagax*, lib. I, cap. 1, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 29.

²⁷ Astral body elevating man over other creatures: *Philos. sagax*, lib. I, cap. 3, *De Compositione Humana*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 55.

²⁸ Astral nature of temperament and passions: *Philos. sagax*, lib. I, cap. 10, *Von dem Dono Inclinationis*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, pp. 229 *et seq.*, and *ibid.*, cap. 11, *Von dem Dono Aegrorum*, pp. 258 *et seq.*

If emotions and passions are bound up with the astral body, so is *insanity*²⁹. It develops when the divine spirit in man is subjugated by his animal instincts: lust, greed, covetousness. These are stirred up by the stars, each star acting on man like a specific drug, for example hemlock. The mean man has chosen Saturn as his mate—each passion one star.

This idea can be directly traced back to Gnosticism. We mentioned the neo-Platonic view of the astral body as the vehicle (*ochema*) of the soul. Owing to its inclination towards the body, the astral body may drag the soul down into the depth of emotional life, the more so the coarser and more material its texture. Indeed, in line with this, several ochemata had been distinguished in later neo-Platonism: the very fine ethereal ochema being even visualized as immortal. In Gnosticism, the astral body is represented as an attachment—*Prosartema*—to the soul, or else as a mimic and coalescing pneuma (*Antimimon* or *Prophyes Pneuma*). This impresses on our souls the images of wolves, monkeys, lions and thereby evokes those passions that are peculiar to each of these animals³⁰.

To Paracelsus the astral body is a “bodily spirit”—i.e. it must be distinguished from the non corporeal divine soul³¹. In this, too, Paracelsus adheres to the neo-Platonic position as opposed to Soicism, which knew of no difference between soul and a fine material breath (Pneuma).

The astral body is, therefore, according to Paracelsus, accessible to examination in the “*Light of Nature*”. Not so the soul, which belongs to the realm of belief and theology. Further distinctions which Paracelsus made concerning the soul and astral body can be correlated with similar distinctions made by neo-Platonists, notably Proclus. Another neo-Platonist, Jamblichus, emphasizes in his treatise *On Mysteries* the difference between reasoning thought and soul, on the one hand, and the secret (*arrheta*) transcendent works and the power of the ineffable symbols that are only understood by the gods, on the other. It is through these works and symbols that the virtues and powers immanent in material bodies achieve union with the gods, whereby theurgy, magical science and divination are made possible³². This idea may well be applicable

²⁹ Insanity and star: *Philosophia Magna* 3 *Liber de Lunaticis*, Tract. III, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 59.

³⁰ Prosartemata: Baur, *Gnosis*, loc. cit., 1835, pp. 214 seq. Bousset, loc. cit., 1907, pp. 361 et seq.

³¹ Astral body to be distinguished from the divine soul: *Philos. sagax*, lib. I, cap. 3, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, pp. 53–54.

³² Jamblichus, *De Mysteriis liber*, ed. G. Parthey, Berol, 1857, sect. I, 21, p. 65; II, 11, pp. 96–97; IX, 10, pp. 284–285. See also *ibid.*, V, 23, p. 232.

to the Paracelsian Astral Body. As we have seen, this is represented as a "bodily spirit". If, according to Jamblichus, the forces immanent in bodies are capable of union with the gods, rather than our soul, the astral body *qua* bodily spirit could provide a more suitable medium for divine powers than the intellect, and, in particular, its reasoning powers which Paracelsus deprecated as "animal".

**THE MAGISTERIAL POSITION OF THE IDEAS AS EXPRESSED IN
SEX DIFFERENTIATION—*Iliaster*—*Semina*—*Archei*—*The Tria Prima*
(SULPHUR, SALT, MERCURY)**

A principle fundamental to Paracelsus' view of the world and man is that of *sexual duality*. It is a principle that he finds operative even in disease. Epilepsy in the female is a different disease from epilepsy in the male³³. A drug effective in men, may fail in women³⁴. Like the Valentinian Gnostics before him³⁵, Paracelsus follows in this the Platonic principle of the preformation and actualization of all phenomena in this world in the divine sphere of the ideas and spirit. There is nothing in the lower world of creation that has not its archetype in the upper world of ideas. Hence there must be an equivalent of male-female duality in the latter. In this the female stands for an emergence of the simple One, quiescent in itself, into the realm of duality and activity. It indicates some loss of status—associated as it is with a process of splitting up and action. Thus Paracelsus says: "God became double, two persons in one"³⁶.

³³ Disease in the male and female: *Opus Paramirum*, lib. IV, *de matrice*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, pp. 194–195; *ibid.*, p. 206.

³⁴ Drug action and sex: *Op. Paramirum*, lib. IV, *de matrice*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, pp. 202 *et seq.*; see also *ibid.*, pp. 184 *et seq.* On sex and disease: P. Diepgen, *Paracelsus und das Problem der Frau. Nova Acta Paracels.* 1957, VIII, pp. 49–54.

³⁵ Sex differentiation in Valentinian Gnosis: Baur, *Gnosis*, *loc. cit.*, 1835, pp. 150–154.

³⁶ God became double: *Liber de Sancta Trinitate*, in Sudhoff, *Paracelsus-Handschriften*, No. 86, Bl. 264b–276b, Berlin, 1899, p. 348.—The idea was fully expressed in the theosophic literature of the early seventeenth century, for example in the *Studium Universale* (1618) attributed to Valentin Weigel: "God is the Word, one God, but divided as personality, there is God and His wife, His wisdom, a complete God and creator: just as Adam was made complete man together with his Eve. This heavenly Eve made God in the beginning God and creator, she is the mother of all that is alive, through her all is manifested, without her there would be no God, no creature, only eternity without time. Therefore eternal and incomprehensible divinity emerged from His eternal hiding and manifested Himself through heavenly Eve. She was in the beginning and before all creature. Afterwards through her God emitted the Son to the world, that is God made himself Son through Wisdom, and yet remained the old God unchanged". Cap. 4, Ed. used 1695, s.l. (Sam. Müller), sig. B5.

However "heavenly woman" is not endowed with "power", but "fills the place of God the Father and makes Him manifest and complete as a Father". This development was repeated by Adam according to the principle of correspondence. Adam corresponds to God the Father and hence is more intimately connected with the world and the elements than is the woman³⁷. Adam carries the "*Limbus*"³⁸, that is the threshold on which spirit and matter come together in the smallest possible compass to form the seed from which the world and he himself were made. Woman serves to manifest and perfect Adam, just as she served God, and again without acquiring any of his power. The apex of perfection wherever achieved is thus symbolized by a hermaphroditic being. Such is the *Rebis* in Alchemy, the peak obtainable in the process of transmutation, the *Quinta Essentia*, the Salt which, according to Thurneisser³⁹, is characterized by its dual, acid-alkaline nature. Ficino said that the Indian sages already called the world a hermaphrodite whose male and female parts are kept together by the world soul⁴⁰. From the bi-sexual nature of the whole follows that of the individuals, including the planets. Female air is attracted by male fire, male water by female earth. The action of the magus is that of the ploughman who marries heaven to earth, joining divine life as contained in the seed with matter. The same idea is expressed in the *Hermetic Books*, notably the *Poemander*⁴¹.

The Platonic correspondences between our world and the invisible magisterial worlds above us are reflected in Paracelsus' idea of the *Iliaster*. This embraces in an ideal form all possible beings and events that can occur in reality. Similarly the term *Aquaster* stands for the "sophic" archetype of all that is watery. Paracelsus pays particular attention to the liminal stages which lead from the ideally preformed to the really existing. These threshold objects between the Ideal and the Real, between Spirit and Matter are the *Semina*. From them, Paracelsus says "comes the foundation in all our knowledge and insight"⁴². For all things have a seed, and in the seed all things are

³⁷ The male (Adam) and the elements: *Labyrinthus Medicorum*, cap. 3, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, p. 178.

³⁸ *Limbus*: *Opus Paramirum de matrice*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, p. 201.

³⁹ Thurneisser zum Thurn, Leonhart, *Quinta Essentia, das ist die höchste subtilitet, krafft und wirckung beyder . . . Künsten, der Medicin und Alchemy*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1574, p. 162. See also: *Aureum Vellus*, Tract. III, *Splendor Solis*, Rorschach, 1598, p. 191: Von dem *Rebis* einem Stein.

⁴⁰ Ficinus, *De Vita coelitus comparanda*, Lib. III, cap. 26, ed. Aldus, 1516, p. 168.

⁴¹ Hermetis Trismegisti *Poemander* rec. G. Parthey, Berol, 1854, cap. 1, pp. 4-8.

⁴² Semina as the foundation in all our knowledge: *Philosophia sagax*, lib. I, cap. 7 (*Probatio partic. in scientiam signatam*), ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 177.

enclosed. In them we observe nature at work—that nature which Plotinus visualized as a “sleeping spirit” and in which action and being are equivalent to contemplation in the spiritual world. In this we may find the very root of the Paracelsian dictum: “the seed lies in speculation”⁴³. He thus tries to express the intimate connection of material effects as emerging from the semina with the sphere of will and imagination. To Paracelsus each seed stands for one idea, one logos that is about to be translated into our reality—this closely approximates the meaning of the *Logoi spermatikoi* of the *Stoa*, as accepted in neo-Platonic speculation. The Hermetic treatise *Poemander* expressed the same thing, identifying God’s universal and creative power with that of the sower: in heaven he sows immortality, on earth transmutation, in the universe life and motion⁴⁴.

The *semina* are “astral”, i.e. they hail from heaven and have a power superior to that of the material elements. In this they are emulated by the three principles *Mercury*, *Sulphur* and *Salt*—as long as these have not yet “impregnated matter”, i.e. assumed a material cover. In this pre-material form they are “*Simplicia formalia*” that give matter a certain directive. Thus Mercury enlivens the parts, sulphur makes them grow, and salt keeps them together by giving them firmness. This the principles achieve by means of their seminal properties and through the occult vital powers of “signature” that account for taste, smell and colour. These are immanent (“*insitae*”) to the principles. Both the *semina* and the *principles* are more closely related to spirit than to matter, and hence both form the class of the “formal simples”—as opposed to the traditional elements of fire, water, earth and air, which should be regarded as “material simples” (“*Simplicia materialia*”). They are the passive substratum that is acted upon by the active *principles* and *semina*. The former are visible, the latter not, and they are only recognized by the life, motion and function which they maintain.

It was thus that the foremost French Paracelcist Quercetanus (Duchesne 1544–1609)⁴⁵ saw the *semina* and *principles* of Paracelsus in two stages: (a) an ideal form—that of the *Simplicia Formalia* which belong to the celestial sphere

⁴³ Seed and speculation: *Das Buch von der gebärung der empfindlichen dinge in der vernunft*, tract. I, cap. 4, ed. Sudhoff, vol. I, p. 256.

⁴⁴ *Poemander*, ed. Parthey, loc. cit., 1854, cap. XIV, 10, pp. 133–134.

⁴⁵ Quercetanus, Jos., *Ad veritatem Hermeticae medicinae ex Hippocratis veterumque decretis ac therapeusi: nec non vivae rerum anatomiae exegesi, ipsiusque naturae luce stabilendam, adversus cuiusdam Anonymi phantasmata Responsio*, Lutet. Paris, 1604, p. 162, cap. XIV (De tribus Chimicis principiis, quae in quovis naturali corpore continentur, ipsumque constituunt).

of magisterial forces not yet incorporated in material objects, and (b) as directive forces present in the empirical objects of nature. Thus mercury makes itself noticeable by the acidity and penetrating power that it lends to fluids, being an ethereal body of highest subtility, a spirituous substance, the essence and pabulum of life. Sulphur is distinguished by conferring sweetness, viscosity and an oily quality which supports and maintains flames, and by emollient and agglutinating properties. Salt makes a body dry and earthy; it promotes solution, coagulation, cleansing, and evacuation.

The three principles, says Quercetanus, correspond to the *Spiritus, Anima* and *Corpus* of the *Hermetic* literature; the Spirit to Mercury, the Soul to Sulphur and the Body to Salt. Sulphur forms the intermediary joining Spirit to Body. It is the *vinculum animae* that has affinity both to body and spirit—like the astral body of the ancients and Paracelsus. In our elemental sphere air is most akin to mercury: all that is powerful and vital, all “*vis* and *acumen*” in spirit of wine, for example, derives from its aerial parts. Air, together with the mercury adherent to it, either escapes or is converted into a “spiritual” or “mercurial” water which owes its sharp astringent taste to mercury or *sal armoniac*. Air and earth are joined together by water. In the elemental sphere the triad of air, water and earth thus corresponds to the three principles in the astral or celestial sphere. There is no need for a fourth element—fire. For this is identical with “heaven” or “ether”—the *fourth* (formerly called *fifth*) *essence*. This had already been the view of the Hermetic thinkers, Quercetanus says. Heaven, therefore, is a pure ethereal fire endowed with virtues far more subtle, pure and powerful than those of the elements, enabling it to penetrate everywhere and to distribute forms and virtues to each individual object. It impregnates the earth by transferring its *semina* to it through the winds, thus being the primary cause of all form, power and action in every object of the inferior world. These *semina* the heavens received from God; they include the most simple and perfect ones such as the stars and planets and also an infinity of other “*astra*” which confer “vital faculties and complexions” to the host of the inferior elements, which they animate and “inform”. In action the lower elements are similar to heaven, but they differ in that heaven is activity pure and simple, whereas the inferior elements also involve corruption and suffering by their action.

It is the celestial—spiritual—essences and forms which the physician and naturalist must study and try to extract, for they alone are productive of miraculous effects. These “formal and spiritual principles” constitute the “universal balsamic medicine” in which all parts are homogeneous, most simple, pure and highly spiritual. It is the true “*quarta essentia*” (“Quint-essence”) and “celestial stone of the philosophers”.

Paracelsus saw working in the *semina* an active force, the *Archeus*. The world is full of such "workmen" or beings intermediate between matter and spirit. Late neo-Platonism had visualized the world split up into innumerable emanations—to which the Paracelsian idea of innumerable *Archei* is comparable. In this field we also find the emphasis laid by neo-Platonic speculation on the traffic between spirits and on the information which we receive about the realm of the spirits—points that were equally emphasized by Paracelsus, who made them the cornerstone of his concept of magic and divination. The *Poemander* too, had expressed these ideas: soul-like principles—demons—can take possession of the soul which they subject to torture and stimulate to evil deeds. There is a communication between souls—the souls of the Gods with human souls and those of man with those of animals⁴⁶. Man occupies an exalted position, for he is possessed of *Nous* and therefore eligible for communication with God who speaks to him through dreams and symbols. It is thus that he acquires the power of divination⁴⁷. Paracelsus' speculations on the traffic between spirits are in many respects reminiscent of those of the Kabbala, notably the later—*Lurian*—trends of the 16th and 17th centuries, including the idea of psychical pregnancy (*Ibbur*) and possession (*Dibkuth*)⁴⁸.

The Paracelsian *Archeus* may well be interpreted as the object itself in its pre-formed "astral", magisterial or "sophic" state. As such the *archeus* is a principle responsible for the moulding of an individual with its specific plan of form and function. It is an individualising principle. At the same time it is part of the world soul and as such connected with divinity. Owing to this it confers the gift of life on individual objects. In this we may see a reflection of the Gnostic idea that the *archon* joins the powers of light with matter, whereby the latter is transformed. These powers are the sparks of life that are specific to each individual. The *archon* can join them to matter as well as separate them from it, an activity comparable to the spa-gyric, i.e. separating and

⁴⁶ *Poemander*, cap. X, 20–22, ed. Parthey, *loc. cit.*, 1854, pp. 80–82.

⁴⁷ *Poemander*, cap. XII, 19, ed. cit., pp. 110–111.

⁴⁸ Ibbur and Dibkuth see the loci quoted by Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 1958, pp. 216–217. On possible, but rather doubtful connexions between Paracelsus and the Kabbala see: G. Scholem, *Alchemie und Kabbala. Ein Kapitel aus der Geschichte der Mystik. Monschr. Gesch. u. Wissensch. d. Judent*, 1925, LXIX, 13–30; 95–110. R. Eisler, *Zur Terminologie der jüdischen Alchemie*, *ibid.*, pp. 364–371 (notably on the term *suspiha*—residual deposits—and its kinship with "sepsis"—corruption and fermentation to which also the metals are subject. According to Eisler gold must ferment and corrupt in order to convert metals into their primordial matter—the dark *chaos*—then into red copper, white silver and finally yellow gold.) See also: G. Scholem, *Nachbemerkung* to Eisler, *ibid.*, pp. 371–374. K. Preis, *Die Medizin im Sohar*, *ibid.*, 1928, LXXII, pp. 167–184, especially p. 170.

combining work of the alchemist⁴⁹. Paracelsus calls the *archeus (archon)* the *internal alchemist*. It forms the individual being and directs its vital functions —first and foremost digestion. For this is the main agency through which the body communicates with the outside world. Material belonging to the latter is transmuted into constituents of the individual with its own properties that are specific to it and its species. Their consumption and excretion, i.e. their return to the non-specific state in the outside world, is also governed by the *archeus*.

THE ELEMENTS—WATER AS ORIGINAL (PRIME) MATTER

Archei not only act in man and other beings, but also in the *Elements*. These Paracelsus sees not as the atomic constituents of every object in the ancient sense, but as dwelling places and matrices. Each of the elements thus has its own offspring: water the minerals and metals, earth man and plants. The *archeus* of water forms the minerals, and these bear the “seal” of their mother: water. Though a “fruit” of water, however, the minerals and metals grow in the earth where they are moulded by the terrestrial *Archeus*⁵⁰. Or in symbolic language: Nature generates a tree in water. This grows out into the earth where it brings forth fruit: the earthborn minerals and metals⁵¹. This is the product of a vital action, i.e. it is specific and cannot be reproduced *in vitro*. Hence the alchemist finds it much easier to transmute than to generate metals⁵².

⁴⁹ The *archon* works like the alchemist, joining the spark of light to matter whereby the latter is endowed with qualities and virtues—and transformed. These virtues become separated from matter, however, when the pneuma achieves liberation and returns to divine simplicity. Again, this process corresponds to the joining and disjoining (spa-gyric) action of the alchemist and also to the migration and creation of soul. In the Gnostic treatise *Kore Kosmou* the demigod prepares “un mélange d’animation” for the creation of the soul in the same way as the alchemist prepares the “sophic mercury” destined for the animation of all metals. It forms a foam on the surface, comparable to the foamy spermatic fluid, and is a fiery water and fluid spirit (“water of life”). See: A. J. Festugière, *La création des âmes dans la Kore Kosmou*. In: *Pisciculi. Studien z. Religion und Kultur des Altertums* F. J. Dolger dargeboten, Münster, 1939, pp. 102–116. The present author is indebted to Professor J. R. Partington for this reference.

⁵⁰ Metals, water and earth: *De Natura Rerum*, lib. I, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, p. 318.

⁵¹ *Das Buch de Mineralibus*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. III, p. 37. Cf. *Philos. Paracelsica de gener, et fruct. quatt. elementor*, Tract. III, cap. 10: Vom Archeo der Metallen, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, p. 105.

⁵² *De Natura Rerum*, lib. I de gener. rer. natur., ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, p. 318.

Water has a much farther reaching significance, however. In Gnostic and early alchemical speculation, it stood for matter at large. It was the dark abyss, the primeval *chaos*. This was represented as the *uncreated* principle of evil and matter and, in a dualistic view, coordinated to divine light. All matter was water and all transmutation operated by the powers of light, all creation and separation took place in and on water. Paracelsus says: "The water was matrix; for in water there was created heaven and earth and in no other matrix . . . as the world was nothing but a water and the spirit of the Lord was on the water, the water was made into the world"⁵³". Moreover, water is "the receptacle of the seed from which man grows, which seed is the *limbus*"⁵⁴. Finally: "Man with his angelic body was in heaven, that is the part above his belt; with the other part he was on the water"⁵⁵. In the last resort these ideas go back to the Biblical saying that the spirit of God hovered over the waters. Any possible connection with a succession in time which may have been construed from this—to the effect that water was the first thing to exist—had been rejected already by the early Jewish and Christian commentators. There is no intention in the *Thorah* to fix any chronological order in the narrative of the creation, let alone any implication that God found water as the pre-existing material from which to create the world⁵⁶. Just this, however, is the Gnostic position according to which matter was uncreated and pre-existing. With this several other ideas were connected: the material world was created in connexion with the fall of Lucifer and the angels whereby these were banned into the prison of material bodies. Moreover the material world including man was said to be due to the activity of a fallen deity (*demiurge*). Finally the divine spark was thought to have been transferred from the *demiurge* to man who was destined to replace the world of the fallen deity (Lucifer). Man thus forms a world of his own—a microcosm—which like the cosmos at large is composed of water and divine spirit. Possession of the divine spark makes man eligible for redemption—which is closed to Lucifer and his realm. In and through man the spirit of God returns to God⁵⁷.

⁵³ Water was matrix: *Opus Paramirum*, lib. IV, *de matrice*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, p. 191.

⁵⁴ Water receptacle of seed (*limbus*): *Opus Paramirum de matrice*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, p. 191.

⁵⁵ Man in heaven and in water: *Liber Azoth*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 593.

⁵⁶ Raschi to Genesis at several places: No chronological order intended by the report on creation. See also: Hirsch Graetz, *Gnostizismus und Judenthum*, Krotoschin, 1846, pp. 30–35. M. Joel, *Blicke i.d. Religionsgesch.*, loc. cit., pp. 162–166; Excurs II: Die Gnosis.

⁵⁷ See above (note 11) the loci from Origen, Baur, Böhme, Croll, Pagel and Sheppard.

The return of the soul to God and of the astral body to the stars was also assumed by Paracelsus⁵⁸. We shall see presently that he also incorporated some of the other Gnostic positions which we mentioned.

PRIME MATTER—CREATION VERSUS PREFORMATION

First of all we must discuss the position of the primeval waters, the abyss of matter, in the cosmology of Paracelsus. Did he also follow in this the Gnostic doctrines and speculations? Did he also regard original matter as something coordinated to God, a power uncreated and not originally subjected to Him? Indeed passages could be adduced from the Paracelsian *Corpus* which seem to support this. On the other hand, the opposite view could be defended—namely that Paracelsus believed in the creation of matter by God. A final decision in this question is therefore hardly possible, even when the testimony of the Paracelsists is called in. We must content ourselves with reviewing the evidence.

Paracelsus says of God that “He made an element water and from it generates the minerals so that they grow daily for the use of mankind”⁵⁹. Thus water was destined to become the matrix of ores, metals and stones. So far the passage is clear. What follows, however, is less so. Here it says that “the first was with God (*bei Gott*), the beginning, that is *ultima materia*; this *ultima materia* He made into prime matter. As fruit that is to yield other fruit has seed, the seed is in prime matter. Thus ultimate matter of the minerals is made into prime matter that is a seed and the seed is the element of water . . .”⁶⁰. In other words God created water as the mother of minerals. This created water, however, was not primeval matter, which here appears to be called ultimate matter and was “with God”. From it God created the “prime matter” of the minerals, i.e. their seed, and this divine seed is the element of water which he created.

⁵⁸ Return of astral body to stars: “Through death the elemental body with its spirit goes to the grave, the ethereal is consumed in its firmament, the spirit of the (divine) image goes to Him whose image it is. Hence each dies in that from which he is, and in this he is buried”, *Philosophia sagax*, Lib. I, Prolog., ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 18. “As the first father dies and with his body returns to the elements, and also with his heaven returns to the star, and hence both are consumed in their father, their children are consumed and buried in their father likewise, that is, what is flesh and blood, in the elements, and that where art and senses lie, in the star; also what is martial is buried in Mars, what is venereal in Venus . . .”, *ibid.*, Lib. I, cap. 2, pp. 47–48.

⁵⁹ He made an element water: *Das Buch de Mineralibus*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. III, p. 33.

⁶⁰ The first was with God: *Ibid.*, p. 34.

The significance of this passage in our context is that primeval matter is assumed to exist "with God" ("bei Gott").

In another passage God, Prime Matter, Heaven and finally the soul (*Gemüt*) of man are juxtaposed as eternal and imperishable⁶¹. From this a primary co-existence of matter with God could be deduced. From the context, however, it would appear to be visualized as one aspect of divinity rather than something independent and of equal status.

It is, however, plainly expressed in the Paracelsian *Corpus* that the "*Mysterium Magnum*", i.e. the first "mother of all creatures" was un-created. It was "prepared" (*zubereitet*) and ever since, nothing like it has existed or ever will exist. Hence God is not a creator, but a separator. For the "*Mysterium Magnum*" contains the individual objects, as a block of marble or wood contains the future statue. The generating power which "was at the beginning of all birth-giving" was separation (*Truphat*)—"the greatest miracle of philosophy". The elements, including water, are late derivatives from the "*Mysterium Magnum*" or, as it is usually called, the *Iliaster*⁶².

We read this in a treatise that is often regarded as spurious, the *Philosophia ad Athenienses*⁶³. There is, however, no doubt that it was popular in Paracelsian circles and expresses genuine Paracelsian thought.

We merely learn from these passages that the original matrix was un-created. It is not stipulated, however, that it existed beside and outside God, in a dualistic and Gnostic sense. It may be just as well interpreted in Pantheistic terms, visualizing the original matrix as a God from whom everything emanates. This could find support in Paracelsus' idea of the *Arcana* which are direct emanations from divinity—stepping out to provide the spiritual soul-like specific power and virtue to each individual object. This is the teaching of a treatise which has always enjoyed the reputation of authenticity. Here it says: "all natural things flow from God and no other source . . . the things are His, the herb He created, not however the virtue that is in it. For each virtue is uncreated; that is, God is without beginning and not created. Thus all virtues and powers were in God, prior to heaven and earth, and before all things were created, when God was a spirit and hovered

⁶¹ God, Prime Matter, Heaven and Man: *Liber de Imaginibus*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, p. 383.

⁶² *Philos. ad Athenienses*, text II-IX, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, pp. 390-393.

⁶³ *Phil. ad Athen.*, unauthentic: K. Sudhoff, *Paracelsus Sämtl. Werke*, I. Abt., vol. XIII, München and Berlin, 1931, p. xi. J. Strelbel, following Sudhoff in his Paracelsus edition, St. Gallen, 1945, vol. II, p. 428.

penalty for the devil, first the element of air that is the *chaos* or heaven and thereafter the other elements.

This expresses the characteristically Gnostic idea that the coming into being of the material world was closely bound up with the fall of Lucifer and his activity. We quoted above the idea expressed by Origen that God created the world in order to ban the fallen spirits into the narrow confinement of material bodies⁶⁷. We may also recall the saying of Poemander that the word of God that was in the elements left them on their downward journey and joined the *Nous* of the creator. Thus the elements of nature, deprived of *logos*, remained and became matter⁶⁸.

Again the passages from Paracelsus just quoted show that the creative act of God appertained to the elements and not necessarily to prime matter. It should be added in fairness, however, that the elements are again definitely stated to have been created from nothing ("also ist der anfang der vier elemten aus nichten beschaffen"). Nevertheless further close contacts with Gnostic ideas emerge from these passages. They are still more evident in what Paracelsus called the *Cagastrum*.

This stands for the splitting up of God's simplicity and unity into the infinite multitude of beings, for elemental materiality, and hence for decay and corruption. All this is due to the fall of Lucifer and of man. Paracelsus believed that some diseases are due to cagastric seed which takes possession of the body after invading it from outside—by contrast with hereditary and endogenous disease which is due to "iliastic" seed. Pleurisy, plague and fevers are such "cagastric" diseases⁶⁹. All *spontaneous generation* belongs to the *Cagastrum*, that is any coming into being without proper parents. The seed of an apple, pear or nut has been there for ever. The cagastric seed emerges here and now from corrupting material. Its offspring differs according to the properties of the matrix.

After the fall the flesh of Adam became cagastric, i.e. subject to corruption—before that it had been iliastic, i.e. divine, immortal and truly alive. Now it is mortal, false and a caricature ("monstrum") of its archetype⁷⁰. All that is genuine is iliastic, all that is fake—false metal, a false prophet—is cagastric. In short, *cagastrum* is falsehood, the fallacious phantom of the phenomenal world. Yet in it there resides a positive and independent original power—as it

⁶⁷ Fall and creation of material world see above (notes 11 and 57).

⁶⁸ *Poemander*, I, 10, ed. Parthey, *loc. cit.*, p. 5.

⁶⁹ Cagastric diseases: *Labyrinthus Medicorum*, cap. 11, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, pp. 215–216.

⁷⁰ Cagaster as "monstrum": *Liber. Azoth*, cap. 1, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 549.

on the waters, that is when God's spirit walked over the waters"⁶⁴. The virtues immanent to objects are therefore divine, supernatural, and without beginning and end—returning to their origin when heaven and earth are destroyed. It goes on to say that God at one point created things—stars, the earth, mountains, herbs, water, fire, air, metals, minerals and planets. "After he had created them they came into being, became apprehensible and visible, and from nothing there was matter which we put to use".

Here, then, the creation of "matter" is mentioned, and that in a genuine Paracelsian treatise. However, "matter" in this context does not mean "primary matter", but the material cover of individual objects. It is therefore hardly relevant in our discussion.

In the genuine book *De Meteoris* (*Liber Meteororum*)⁶⁵ each of the four elements—the dwelling places and matrices of objects—is said to have its own body that was made from nothing. It was solely made by the word of God: *Fiat*. Each of these four elements has its own "prime matter": "one is *materia prima* of water, another of earth, another of air, another of heaven". Again a comparatively late stage in the creative process is discussed: the production of a material base for the four elemental realms. It is not, however, the general unqualified matter, the *chaos* and *limbus* which embraces all the elements yet unseparated and in a potential form.

Later, in the *Prologue to the Books on Meteors*, we are told that the place occupied by the four elements had originally been the "heaven of Lucifer who was not ejected from it, but the same heaven was made perishable and elemental; this is his punishment that he must stay therein, whereas he could not foresee that God would convert such a heaven, such a bliss into elements"⁶⁶. Here, then, we learn that something preceded the elements at the place where they are found today: namely Satan and his realm. This, before his punishment, was heaven—to be converted into hell by the creation of the elements from nothing. To be relegated to the sphere of the elements was the very punishment that was meted out to Lucifer. What greater retribution could be exacted than confinement to things perishable and the change from the light of heaven to the darkness which is the transitory world? Hence the devil and his henchmen dwell in the elements, some in water, some in fire, some in air and others in earth. It is the perishable world that God has created as a

⁶⁴ Virtues uncreated: *De vera influentia rerum*, tract. I, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 215.

⁶⁵ *De Meteoris*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, p. 134.

⁶⁶ Heaven of Lucifer: Prolog. *Konzepte u. Ausarbeitungen zum Liber Meteororum*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, pp. 253–254.

was visualized in Gnostic speculation on the original force of the abyss of darkness and evil.

In spite of all the evidence which we have collected in favour of or at least not against, a Paracelsian belief in uncreated original matter, we do have one outspoken piece of testimony for its creation in the Paracelsian *Corpus*: "Thus God the Father created through His word things not in their ultimate state, but He only created *Prima Materia confusa*, that is the matrix, in which all Nature of the whole world was mixed together . . . called abyss and earth or a thing in which all things lie hidden . . . and this *Prima Materia* was the water on which the spirit of the Lord had hovered . . . *Materia prima* made from nothing and hence called *Abyssus* . . . ". This is what the *Secretum Magicum de Lapide Philosophorum* tell us⁷¹. Matter is created; not so the individual object, or only to the extent that it is part of the prime matter from which it emerges as the result of the separating and composing work of the *Archei*.

The *Secretum Magicum*, however, is certainly not normally regarded as a genuine work of Paracelsus. It first appeared in Huser's Folio edition of 1603 under the title: *Von dreyen gebenedeyten Magischen Steinen, Theophrasti Paracelsi, welches auss seiner Handschrift kommen*. It was then reprinted on several occasions, for example in Gottfried Arnold's *Kirchen-und Ketzerhistorie* where it forms one piece of evidence for the piety of Paracelsus⁷². Thus at all events the treatise informs us about the opinion of some *Paracelsists* in this matter. It is worth while to hear what they have to say⁷³.

A straightforward account of our question is found in the work of Robert Fludd (1574–1637). In his *History of Both Worlds of the Macrocosm and Microcosm*, he raises the question of the origin of prime matter, whether it was created or not. On this question, he says, there is "*ingens dissensio*" among

⁷¹ *Secretum Magicum*, ed. Huser Fol, vol. II, pp. 672–673.

⁷² See K. Sudhoff, *Bibliographia Paracelsica*, 1894, Repr. Graz, 1958, p. 445, and the Huser-Folio of 1603.

⁷³ Among the Paracelsists, Oswald Croll (1580–1609) fails to give a clear-cut answer about the position of prime matter. He seems to take a Pantheistic view: God is the All out of himself and man is All made by God. *Basilica Chymica* (1608), ed. Hartmann, Genevae, 1643, p. 60, Engl. transl. by H. Pinnell, *Philosophy reformed*, London, 1657, pp. 58 et seq. Nor can any direct information be obtained from the author of: *Introductio Hominis oder kurtze Anleitung zu eim Christlichen Leben*, in: *Philosophia Mystica. Eilff Theologico-Philosophische Tractälein, auss Theophrasti Paracelsi, zum theil auss Valentini Weigelii . . .*, Newstadt, 1618, pp. 236–237. Here prime matter is said to have come into being (*ihren Anfang bekommen*) before all time and to embrace all four elements unseparated and mixed together.

philosophers. Most of them believe with Artephius that God created Nature and First Matter. Others, however, with Paracelsus and his followers, call matter a *Mysterium Magnum* that was neither created nor resembles any other creature, but was simply "prepared" by God. The Paracelsists argue that the scriptural verse: "In the beginning (*principio*) God created heaven and earth" does not prove the creation of matter. *Principium* need not mean first in time; it could mean first in some order or process or even first at some place. Indeed when creation occurred there was no time. Nor can heaven and earth have been created first without matter already existing, for "heaven and earth" are *principiata*, i.e. something formed from some more primitive material, from a *principium*. Nor can this *principium* really be a place, for the creative word of God is beyond human comprehension and thus not associative with any place in this world. Paracelsus therefore interprets the scriptural verse differently: God created heaven and earth in the *Mysterium Magnum* that was un-created⁷⁴. With this Fludd has recourse to the doctrine of the *Philosophia ad Athenienses*. He himself, however, does not wish to decide the issue, though from indirect evidence we can say that Fludd favoured the orthodox view of Artephius. Finally Fludd invokes St. Augustine, with whom he declares prime matter not to be anything real, but something that our imagination presents as a "nearly nothing", an intermediate stage between the absolute nothing and something created and endowed with form. It merely exists by virtue of its potentiality; it is really a nothing that may, however, become something through endowment with divine form⁷⁵.

Among Paracelsists who definitely asserted that God created prime matter, the abyss of the waters, the *Chaos*, from nothing, we quote Heinrich Khunrath (1560-1605) and Quercetanus whom we mentioned above.

Khunrath says⁷⁶ that the very first *weltanfängliche* (world-inchoating) *Chaos* was created by the unique tri-une God. From this afterwards the world was built up. It consisted of heaven, earth and water in tri-unity and was impregnated and animated by the spirit of the Lord, who hovered on the

⁷⁴ R. Fludd, *Utriusque Cosmi majoris sc. et minoris . . . Historia*, vol. I, Oppenheim J. Th. de Bry, 1617, pp. 23-24.

⁷⁵ R. Fludd, *Tomi Secundi Tractatus Secundus De Praeternaturali Utriusque Mundi Historia*, Frankfurt, 1621. Sect. 1, Port. 1, Part II, lib. 1: De primariis naturae elementis. Cap. 5: De scrupulo nonnullorum, qui adversus opinionem meam, qua hylem incretam esse statuo, insurgunt, pp. 89-90. The present author is indebted to Mr. Allen Debus for this reference.

⁷⁶ Heinr. Khunrath, *Vom hylealischen, das ist Pri-materialischen Catholischen oder Allgemeinen Natürlichen Chaos der naturgemässen Alchymiae und Alchymisten*, Magdeburg, 1597; ed. used: Leipzig, 1786.

water, i.e. the dark watery abyss formed by heaven, earth and water mixed together. God therefore created prime matter—but, Khunrath adds, he did not create Nature. This developed independently through separation and partition of the ground of primary matter tilled and sown by the spirit of God.

Quercetanus said⁷⁷ that God created from nothing the *Chaos*, that is the abyss of the waters. These were animated by the spirit of God. There followed the separation of Light or ethereal heaven—a spiritual body of greatest purity, the *Quinta Essentia*, from the darkness of the waters. The latter became subjected to a process of separation in its turn. A more subtle—mercurial and aerial—liquor was separated from an oily-sulphureous one and this finally from a dry residue—the salt. Heaven, that is light as separated from “dark” water, also consists of these three fundamental “principles” without which nothing can exist or generate. However, only the finest and purest “ethereal” mercury, sulphur and salt are brought together to form the crystalline and diamond-like most simple body of heaven. From it the forms and *semina* are infused into the thicker elements for the generation of each individual object. These forms and *semina* are heaven’s “fruit” which in essence is similar to the substance of heaven itself. They generate something similar again inside the elements that provide “thick” covers, through vital impression and influx. The ratio of thick to subtle matter determines the durability of the individual object. One that belongs to air is much less subtle than heaven, but still much finer and more durable than the offspring of water and earth. Mercurial fruit—spirits—of the air are the winds; the sulphur of air makes itself perceptible in the comets, its salt in manna, dew and frost.

In conclusion we must admit that Paracelsus conceded a position of prominence and independence to Prime Matter (*Mysterium Magnum*, *Iliaster*, *Limbus*)—an assignation that is reminiscent of Gnosticism and Platonic dualism. The evidence suggesting that he believed that it was uncreated and co-existed with God is controversial. He may have meant this in a Pantheistic sense, visualizing prime matter and nature as one aspect of divinity. Nevertheless in his view the creation of individual objects from nothing seems to be overshadowed by a process of separation and the demiurgic activity of the *archei* (archons). The more the world is split up into individual objects and beings—and this individuation seems to be the essential process in the coming into being of the world—the more the need for the material and elemental, for intermediate beings, for residues—the products of corruption of more and more independent primary matter, remote from divine simplicity and oneness and the realm of the spirits.

⁷⁷ Jos. Quercetanus, *Ad veritatem Hermeticae Medicinae*, loc. cit., Paris, 1604, p. 184.

CAGASTRUM—TARTAR—DISEASES VERSUS DISEASE

We mentioned the *Cagastrum* as a reminiscence of Gnosticism in Paracelsus. It embraces the splitting up of simplicity owing to the egotistic yearning of individual objects for independence, resulting from their "fall". This process leads to the efflorescence of "fruit" from the smooth surface of an elementary medium or receptacle. This is the pattern of all bodily change that is indicative of disease. The disease "fruit" consists of residual deposits, the products of pathological coagulation which normally are dissolved and thus do not appear. Health is the solution and assimilation of all that finds access to the body from outside. Disease is the failure of the internal "balm", the "mummy" or *archeus* to dissolve and assimilate. Hence the quest for the universal solvent, the *Liquor Alkahest*, which at the same time acts as a universal remedy.

From these ideas the *Tartar* pathology of Paracelsus developed. He compared the pathological changes in the organs with deposits of tartar in wine vats. They also deserve their name because of the hellish pain and suffering they cause, and finally as the visible expression of cagastric—satanic—interference with the dissolving and assimilating forces of the body, the seduction of the *archeus* from the function allotted to it in the commonwealth of the organism. In this doctrine of tartar, attention is focused on the outside origin of the pathogenic agent. There are as many such agents as there are diseases. Disease and agent are the same thing. Each disease therefore really exists as such, forming an organism of its own with its own functional schedule, imposing it on the body like a parasite. This "ontological" view of disease is alien to ancient medicine, in which disease in general was more important than diseases—there were no classifiable diseases as determined by specific exogenous agents and anatomical changes varying accordingly. There was only the sick man, and any differences in symptoms and signs were thought to be due to differences in temperament as the result of a humoral mixture that was characteristic of the individual.

The independent agents that introduce diseases into the human body from outside bring us back to the Semina and Logoi. Each object and each phenomenon in the world of Paracelsus represents something specific and spiritual—so does disease and even more so its specific "seed". Hence not only the seeds from which objects and organisms are generated, but also those that cause illness are connected with the spheres of will and wilful imagination. Thus are explained the intimate psycho-somatic associations, the "conversion" of thought, inclinations, and desires, into symptoms and pathological changes. One such example is the mole on the skin of a foetus due to the imagination of the mother.

AIR—LIFE—COMBUSTION—FIRE

One reflection of the exalted position granted to spirit in neo-Platonism may be seen in the attention given by Paracelsus and Renaissance philosophers to the *air*. It is the medium that makes life possible—in man as well as the universe. It transmits the influence of the stars including “astral poison” such as the *contagium*. Air is closely associated with the “*Mysterium Magnum*”, the “Mother of all Things”, the giver of divine life⁷⁸. Life, generally speaking, was to Paracelsus a process of combustion. “If I say it cannot burn, this is as much as if I said it cannot live”. “For in the air is the force of all life”⁷⁹. Life is invisible celestial fire, air enclosed in a body, a tinging spirit of salt⁸⁰. Similarly Agrippa⁸¹ had called the air the spirit of life which penetrates all, endowing it with life and support. It is the spirit that binds all, moves all and fills all. Air is the mirror which reflects all and in which all astral powers are concentrated. Air, and all that it contains, enters through the skin, and that includes even the “spirit of a place”, explaining the terror we may experience at the site of a murder. The transmission of spiritual images, and traffic between spirits through the air, explains the phenomena of prophecy and the Paracelsian *Chaomantie*⁸². Not only spiritual, but even corporeal images (*idola*) can become detached, condensed in air and through light and motion fall into perception or exert miraculous effects in us, as Plotinus already taught. Many optical phenomena such as mirages and the *Camera obscura* belong to this field. A further source for the significance of the air as the seat of invisible spirits, of demons and heroes can be found in the hermetic *Asclepius*⁸³.

Two types of *Fire* had been distinguished in Stoic as well as neo-Platonic speculation: the “sophic” fire of the stars, the fire of the soul that nourishes and confers life (*Pyr Noeron*) and ordinary fire that is merely destructive⁸⁴. Later and notably Gnostic sources mention the bright fire that is in the nature of

⁷⁸ Paracelsus, *Volumen Paramirum: De Ente Astrorum*, cap. VI, ed. Sudhoff, vol. I, p. 182.

⁷⁹ Paracelsus, *Liber Azoth*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, pp. 549 and 558.

⁸⁰ Paracelsus, *De Natura Rerum*, lib. IV, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, p. 330.

⁸¹ Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, lib. I, cap. 6, ed. Lugduni, 1550, pp. 11 seq.

⁸² Paracelsus, *Philosophia Sagax*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 95.

⁸³ *Asclepius*, ed. Mars. Ficino, cap. XII, loc. cit., 1516, fol. 131v.—132v.

⁸⁴ Fire of the soul: E. Kroll, *Lehre des Hermes Trismegistos*, Münster, 1914, pp. 266, 285, 301. E. O. v. Lippmann, *Alchemie*, loc. cit., 1919, p. 197.

light and the "dark" fire⁸⁵. Similarly Paracelsus distinguishes between "essential" and "material" fire—the former operates by means of its specific "essential" virtues and powers, the latter through its consuming flame⁸⁶. The Paracelsist Heinrich Khunrath (1560–1605) calls the essential fire "*Ignis Magorum*" and devoted a special treatise to it⁸⁷.

Fire and air from the upper sphere are the sources of the soul and life of the body, a breath or spirit infused by God into man—thus we are told by the theosophic author of the *Studium Universale*⁸⁸.

PARACELSIUS' CONCEPTION OF TIME

Paracelsus' ideas on Time present aspects that concur with the new orientation introduced by Plotinus and Proclus. Following in their footsteps, Paracelsus interpreted time in terms of qualitative standards—as opposed to its quantitative-numerical determination in Peripatetic philosophy. Paracelsus' attitude is partly prompted by his criticism of traditional astrology—another point of contact with Plotinus⁸⁹. Yet time, according to Paracelsus, is still closely correlated with the stars, though not in quantitative-numerical terms. The stars are luminous indicators of time, but do not generate time as the measure of their motion. Nor do they govern or direct man and man's actions. On the contrary, the wise will dominate the stars. It was precisely for the desire to appropriate the power of the stars through magic, that Paracelsus was blamed and associated with the heathen doctrines of Pomponatius (1462–1524) by his main adversary Thomas Erastus⁹⁰. In this, however,

⁸⁵ Light and "dark" fire: see loci quoted in W. Pagel, *Paracelsus, loc. cit.*, 1958, pp. 212–213.

⁸⁶ Essential and material fire: *De Renovatione et Restoratione*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. III, p. 209. The salamander lives in essential fire: *Liber Azoth*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 577.

⁸⁷ H. Khunrath, *De Igne Magorum Philosophorumque secreto externo et visibili, das ist Philosophische Erklärung des geheimen, äusserlichen, sichtbaren Glut und Flammenfeuers der uralten Weisen und andrer wahrer Philosophen*, Strasburg, 1608. Edition used: Leipzig, 1783.

⁸⁸ Pseudo-Weigel, *loc. cit.*, cap. I, sig. A2 recto.

⁸⁹ See for the more important loci: Plotinus, *Ennead*, III, lib. I, cap. 5–6, ed. H. F. Müller, Berlin, Weidmann, 1880, vol. I, pp. 161–163. Paracelsus, *Philosophia Magna; De Vera Influentia Rerum*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 219. *De Inventione Artium, ibid.*, p. 251 seq.

⁹⁰ Th. Erastus, *Disputat. de Medicina Nova Paracelsi*, I, Basil, 1572, p. 111; see also pp. 117 and 128. Against Paracelsus on the "augural" power of words and "characters," p. 169. Against augurs and the omens derived from the action of birds: pp. 198–199, 221–222. See Pagel, *Paracelsus, loc. cit.*, 1958, p. 317.

Paracelsus had been foreshadowed by Ficino, who taught the scholar how to overcome the adverse influence of "his" star (notably Saturn) on his body⁹¹. Paracelsus recognizes a close connexion between time and the stars in so far that the latter maintain, as it were, a register or "portrait" of all change and all events on earth and in the life of man. Moreover, the virtues immanent to all objects and man are "astral" and each follows the pattern indicated by its cognate star. Virtue in this sense stands for the course that is specifically followed by the individual in unfolding his own life according to his own specific schedule. This is the "internal knowledge" (*scientia*) which enables the organism to direct its form and function towards the achievement of its own specific purpose in life, to its own perfection. This internal working of nature towards perfection in the individual, Paracelsus calls the "Light of Nature"—at all events that is one of the principal meanings of this term, whereby it is associated with the stars. For the intrinsic plan of form and function lies with the astral body, the quintessence and spirit of the individual organism—a spirit that is in the last resort derived from the stars. Each individual object reaches its perfection at a certain moment. This climax in the life of the individual, Paracelsus calls its "monarchy". Time, then, is determined by the points at which individual objects achieve perfection. One group of objects comes to such maturity in summer, another in autumn or even in winter; some things reach their monarchy at a quick, others at a slow pace. Time, therefore, is the chain that connects the summits of monarchy experienced by individual objects at certain points. It indicates the relationship between these monarchies. In other words it entirely depends upon the quality and "virtue" of the object. Hence all that matters in time is the present⁹²—the moment that is, when perfection is reached. Time is therefore no number, no instrument of counting; it has nothing to do with succession as such, with "empty" time. By contrast, each individual thing has its own time, its own pace and rhythm of life, as intrinsic in its seed and derived from the "astra".

Not only individuals, but also periods and epochs in the life of humanity have their own time. This is the *Zeitgeist* (spirit of time). What is valid today may have lost its reality tomorrow. Ancient medicine had its climax in antiquity; it is of no use today. Paracelsus thus feels his vocation for the creation of a new medicine born out of the specific exigencies of his own time.

⁹¹ Ficinus, *De Vita coelitus comparanda* (1489); see Pagel, *Paracelsus, loc. cit.*, 1958, p. 220.

⁹² Importance of the present, the "now": *Die erste Defension* (1537–38), ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, pp. 127–128. On the Light of Nature and its connexion with the stars: *Philos. sagax*, I, cap. 1, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 23. See Pagel, *loc. cit.*, 1958, p. 75.

Before Paracelsus, Arnald of Villanova (1235-1311) had been actuated by similar motives. There are further points of contact between these figures, although Paracelsus himself gives Arnald but limited credit and only for such Franciscan-Joachimite and Chiliastic ideas⁹³ as were connected with the prophecy of an impending end of the world, the coming of the Anti-Christ and the "Third Kingdom". In the same field we find Paracelsus quoting with approval the prophecies of Hildegard of Bermersheim (commonly called Hildegard of Bingen, 1098-1179)⁹⁴.

In associating Time with the specific virtue intrinsic to the object, Paracelsus foreshadowed the biological concept of Time that was to be developed by Joh. Baptista Van Helmont (1579-1644). The latter in turn was inspired in this by neo-Platonic speculation.

THE PRINCIPLE OF TRICHOTOMY AND THE TRIA PRIMA

One of the principles adhered to by Paracelsus is that of *trichotomy*. Man consists of a divine spirit, an astral body and an elemental body. This division repeats the trichotomous anthropology of Hermetic and Gnostic literature and of neo-Platonism. It was also preceded by mediaeval alchemy in which metals were compared with organic bodies ascribing to them body, soul and spirit. For example the "Philosopher" says: The "dragon" is "live silver" extracted from bodies and possessing body, soul and spirit⁹⁵. Mercury (*Aurum vivum*) is cold, moist and black in virtue of its body, but warm and dry, in virtue of its spirit, and white in virtue of its soul⁹⁶.

A further significant example is the *Tria Prima*: Salt, Sulphur and Mercury which are supposed to be the principal constituents of all objects. This trichotomy is largely an original Paracelsian conception⁹⁷. At all events it was Paracelsus who inculcated and applied it in detail. His alchemist predecessors had preferred such dichotomic divisions as male-female, active-passive,

⁹³ *Opus Paramirum*, I: De Orig. morbor. ex tribus substant. prim., ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, p. 54. On Paracelsus and Arnald de Villanova see: P. Diepgen, *Die Weltanschauung Arnalds von Villanova und seine Medizin*, Scientia Milano, 1937, p. 41. *Idem*, "Theophrastus von Hohenheim", *Research and Progress*, 1942, VII, 111-112. Pagel, *Paracelsus*, *loc. cit.*, 1958, p. 249 *et seq.*

⁹⁴ Paracelsus, *Fragmenta cum libro de fundamento sapientiae congruentia*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, p. 334. Pagel, *loc. cit.*, 1958, p. 210 *seq.*

⁹⁵ *Rosarium Philos.*, ed. Manget, Bibl. Chem., vol. II, p. 94.

⁹⁶ Roger Bacon, *De Arte Chymica*, Francon., 1603, p. 46.

⁹⁷ See R. Hooykaas, *Chemical Trichotomy before Paracelsus?*, Arch. Internat. d'Hist. des Sciences, 1949, XXVIII, 1063-1074.

Sulphur-Mercury. The *Salia* of metals had been discussed—but not in the Paracelsian sense of a third principle; they rather indicated a state of hardening which called for solution. It is also true that the *Latin Geber* speaks of the *Tria Principia* of metals, namely Sulphur, *Argentum Vivum* and Arsenic—but in this Arsenic occupied no position similar to that of *Sal* in the Paracelsian scheme⁹⁸.

No chemical or alchemical predecessor of the Paracelsian scheme is therefore readily demonstrable. There is no doubt, however, that it is in accordance with neo-Platonic and Hermetic tradition. Paracelsus himself referred to Hermes who called the soul the intermediary between Spirit and Body. This soul Paracelsus identified with Sulphur: “the soul is the sulphur which reconciles two opposites and joins them together into one”⁹⁹. Hermes rightly said, Paracelsus adds, that all seven metals, and also the “tinctures” and the Philosophers’ Stone derive from three substances which he calls spirit, soul and body. These are indeed the *Three Principles*.

In this context it is of particular interest that Ficino is quoted by the commentator of a late, probably spurious “Hermetic” tract dealing with alchemical problems, which also gives itself a “Hermetic” garb by interpreting the trichotomy of soul, spirit and body in chemical terms. This is the *Tractatus Aureus de Lapidis Physici Secreto*, first coming to light as late as 1600¹⁰⁰. Here we are told of the conjunction between heaven and earth—the former corresponding to the soul, the latter to the body. For this conjunction there is need for “something third”—this Marsilius Ficinus called something most subtle, no longer body and almost soul and not soul, but almost body¹⁰¹. In the physical world heaven corresponds to “useful water” and earth to “useless residue”, the “Faex”. Between these two stands the spirit—endowed with two aspects: that of a physical substance and that of an occult spirit. It is comparable to a subtle smell or fine balm and as it is believed to be combustible presented as sulphur.

Here, then, we find in an alchemical tract composed in the ancient—“Hermetic”—fashion the trichotomy of the Principles: the fluid-airy heaven

⁹⁸ Geber, *Summa Perfectionis*, lib. I, cap. 27. In: *De Alchimia*, Nürnberg, Joh. Petreius, 1541, p. 60, also cap. 25, p. 55, and cap. 26, p. 56. See on the position of arsenic in comparison with the Paracelsian Salt: Hooykaas, *loc. cit.*, 1949, p. 1070. W. Ganzenmüller, *Paracelsus und die Alchemie des Mittelalters* in: *Beiträge z. Geschichte d. Technologie und Alchemie*, Weinheim, 1956, p. 306. W. Pagel, *loc. cit.*, 1958, p. 269, note 215 and p. 270.

⁹⁹ Paracelsus, *De Natura Rerum*, lib. I, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, p. 318.

¹⁰⁰ In: Manget, *Bibliotheca Chemica et Curiosa*, Genevae, 1702, vol. I, pp. 400–445 (notably pp. 422 *et seq.*).

¹⁰¹ See above, note 7.

animating the universe and corresponding to Paracelsian Mercury, earth representing dead "faex"—the Paracelsian *Sal*, and as the intermediary bridging the contrast a combustible subtly corporeal spirit or smell—the Paracelsian Sulphur.

Neo-Platonic trichotomy could not fail to appeal to Paracelsus also because of its connotation with the Christian-religious trichotomy.

THE SYMBOL OF THE CIRCLE

Traces and reflections of neo-Platonic circle symbolism can also be found in Paracelsus. He visualizes the *Iliaster* and *Idechtrum*, the ideal world in which all possible events and creatures are preformed, as a Globule¹⁰². "Sphaera-globule" is the term commonly used for heaven and universe¹⁰³. Man, an offspring partly of the star and partly of the earth, is microcosm and quintessence of the whole "machina mundi", he is the *centre* into which all *spheres* "infuse" their rays. Man is in the centre of all creatures and of the whole "machina mundi". Indeed the latter was created because of and for the centre. All that is external to man, converges upon him and he as the centre receives it¹⁰⁴.

More explicitly the symbol of the circle was used by some Paracelsists, notably Croll, Severinus and Michael Maier.

It is the centre of all circles which we must approach in our investigation of nature—as against the circulatory motions of the elements which were the subject of ancient philosophy. God's work is circular in that all that was made tends back to Him in "circular rotation". Hence the work is perfect. God is the centre—for all derives from Him. He is the circle—for he embraces all. This we are told by Oswald Croll (1580–1609)¹⁰⁵ the Paracelsist. He also connects the spheres which compose the world, each with a specific seed. In this again we find traces of circular symbolism, for all comes from and returns to seed—as we witness in plants and trees. Hence prime matter is the seed of the whole world and the latter the seed of Adam.

¹⁰² Paracelsus, *Fragmenta Anatomiae Theophrasti*, ed. Huser Fol., vol. II, p. 21; ed. Sudhoff, vol. III, p. 465. *Secretum Magicum von dreyen Gebenedeyten Magischen Steinen*, ed. Huser Fol., vol. II, p. 671. K. Goldammer, *Paracelsus. Natur und Offenbarung*, Hanover, 1953, p. 35 (quoting from *Psalmenkommentar* to Ps. 150, 22).

¹⁰³ See M. Müller's *Registerband zu Sudhoff's Paracelsus-Gesamtausgabe*, Nova Acta Paracels. Einsiedeln. Supplementum, 1960, p. 101, sub: *globul.*

¹⁰⁴ *Entwürfe zur Astronomia Magna, De Compos. humanae generat*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 454.

¹⁰⁵ O. Croll, *Basilica Chymica*, ed. Hartmann, loc. cit., 1643, p. 57 seq.

The seed—owing to its intimate blending of body and spirit—is a true *Ens*. Developing into the corruptible object it becomes *Non-Ens*. Before perishing, however, this has developed further seed, and thus regenerated its seminal *Ens*—a cycle that is ever repeated. This “circular perfection” of the seeds makes the continuity of the world possible. Thus we are told by another Paracelsist, some thirty years prior to Croll: Peter Severinus (1542–1602)¹⁰⁶. He also saw in the seed the carrier of internal wisdom—a *scientia* that can neither be taught nor learned. It is that intrinsic awareness that enables things to realize their specific life-aims within their own time. With all this Severinus felt himself to speculate on Platonic lines.

Finally we may refer to the “physical circle” which the Rosicrucian and Alchemist Michael Maier (1568–1622) believed himself to recognize in gold¹⁰⁷. It indicates the perfect equality of all its constituents—an equality that is also found in the sun, the king of the planets, and in the human heart. Gold, sun and heart make harmony in the world possible. In this a circulation is operative: Divine strength flows into the sun, from there into the gold harboured by the earth and from the latter into the heart. It is by rotatory movement that the “circle of gold” achieves simplicity and homogeneity—the squaring of the circle.

MAGIA NATURALIS—GAMAHEU—ENGRAVED IMAGES

Mighty power is wrought in Words, Plants and Stones. According to neo-Platonic as well as Paracelsian speculation, the *magus* transfers the powers of the stars to plants and in particular to gems—these are the *Gamaheu* of Paracelsus and may be regarded as the successor of the Gnostic and Abraxas gems with their characteristic graven images. Paracelsus believed in the natural occurrence of such images as are found on rocks and in caves and secret passages. They appeared at God’s command, carrying a secret message that is understood by magicians and chiromancers¹⁰⁸. With this Paracelsus took sides in a controversy that had stirred up mediaeval opinion. Consciously or unconsciously he supported the view of Konrad von Megenberg (1309–1374) whose *Buch der Natur* he is likely to have known. This was largely, but not entirely, a German version of the Encyclopedia written in Latin by Thomas of Chantimpre (c. 1201–1270). One of the points in which Konrad disagrees

¹⁰⁶ Peter Severinus, *Idea Medicinae Philosophicae*, Basel, 1571, pp. 89–90. See W. Pagel, *William Harvey and the Purpose of Circulation*. *Isis*, 1951, XLII, p. 34.

¹⁰⁷ Mich. Maier, *De Circulo Physico Quadrato*, Oppenheim, 1616. See W. Pagel, *Isis*, loc. cit., 1951, XLII, 36.

¹⁰⁸ Paracelsus, *De Imaginibus*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, pp. 373–375.

with the master is precisely the natural occurrence of the images: Thomas had denied, Konrad asserted it¹⁰⁹. The latter referred to the consonant opinion of Techel the Jew (Thetel, Zahel), in almost the same laudatory terms as the author of the Paracelsian treatise *Liber Principiorum Paracelsi*, the so called *Schlangen—und Spinnenbuch*¹¹⁰. Here Techellus, the author of a lapidary, translated and incorporated in Thomas' encyclopedia, is praised both by Konrad and by the *Liber Principiorum* as a great master in Israel. It is true that this Paracelsian treatise, although admittedly based on genuine Paracelsian sentiments, is commonly regarded as spurious¹¹¹. However, the same support is given to Konrad's opinion in *De Imaginibus*, a treatise of the Paracelsian *Corpus* which has always enjoyed the reputation of authenticity¹¹².

POSSIBLE PATRISTIC, MEDIAEVAL AND RENAISSANCE SOURCES FOR NEO-PLATONIC TRENDS IN THE SPECULATION OF PARACELSUS
LIGHT OF NATURE—CHAOS—SEMINA

The frequency and significance of neo-Platonic ideas in the work of Paracelsus are not surprising. For it was in Renaissance neo-Platonism that he could find the sources and traditions that led to the uncovering of the Occult and Invisible in Nature. These *Magnalia Naturae* were to Paracelsus the *Magnalia Dei*; to search for and acquire knowledge of them fulfils divine will and human destiny. Hence this is the way to truth—it is given to the layman, the simple and unlearned, the observer of nature, unprejudiced by complacent human reasoning, formal logic and book learning. It comes to the chosen in their sleep, in dreams and visions and in the constraining reality of signs and symbols that reveal the truth at once. "Scientia" is primarily in the object, and we acquire it as the result of a union of the observer with the object. This he can attain by virtue of being a microcosm in which all components of the greater world are represented. As like unites with like, such a union can take place in him, supported by the action of the world soul. This is the way that will confer power over the stars, it is the royal road of natural science and medicine: all that may be briefly summarised in the term *Magia Naturalis*—the art of marrying heaven with earth, as Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) had defined it.

¹⁰⁹ Konrad von Megenberg, *Das Buch der Natur*, ed. Fr. Pfeiffer, Stuttgart, 1861, Lib. VI, 84, Von dem Tethelspuechl, p. 469.

¹¹⁰ Paracelsus, *Liber Principiorum*, cap. 5, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 503.

¹¹¹ E. Schubert and K. Sudhoff, *Paracelsus-Forschungen*, vol. II, Frankfurt, 1889, p. 137, note.

¹¹² See for a detailed discussion: W. Pagel, *Paracelsus and Techellus the Jew*, *Bullet. Hist. Med.*, 1960, XXXIV, pp. 274–277.

We mentioned in several places Marsilio Ficino and Agrippa of Nettesheim. Both these can be safely regarded as fixed points in the literary sources through which neo-Platonic and magic tradition came to Paracelsus. There are, however, other probable sources of inspiration, notably Trithemius (1462–1516), one of the learned ecclesiastic teachers of Paracelsus, and the large library which he is known to have possessed and continually enriched with alchemical and “pansophic” treatises¹¹³. There was also contemporary alchemical literature such as Brunschwig’s *Destillirbuch*. For leading philosophical ideas such as the rejection of scholastic and book-learning in favour of the simple experience that leads the mind of the apparently ignorant to truth, Paracelsus could have found a number of predecessors since the days of Petrarch (1304–74), notably in Nicolaus Cusanus (1401–64). It was here that the layman—*Idiota*—was introduced in a dialogue with the learned philosopher whom he has no difficulty to confound, and it is here that we find the first recommendation of the use of the balance in biology and medicine as a means of uncovering the occult laws and rules inherent in vital functions¹¹⁴.

In propounding his anthropocentric philosophy and basing it on neo-Platonic speculation, Paracelsus is rightly regarded as an exponent of the Renaissance. It must be borne in mind, however, that there is much that is mediaeval in his speculations. In this he can be seen in contact with those trends in mediaeval philosophy that brought about a revival of Platonism. It is not accidental that through this neo-Platonic aspect, and its reception of Stoic elements, mediaeval philosophy inspired naturalism. Thus the symbolism connected with light as a direct divine force in the cosmos greatly advanced the study of optics. This neo-Platonism was as close to mysticism as to natural science¹¹⁵.

Paracelsus throughout the phases of his literary activity used the term *Light of Nature* to indicate a concept of considerable importance in his speculations on man and his position in the cosmos. He regarded nature as the totality

¹¹³ On Trithemius and the alchemical tracts of his “pansophic” library: W.-E. Peuckert, *Die grosse Wende*, 1948, pp. 430–431. See also K. Goldammer, *Die bischöflichen Lehrer des Paracelsus*, Arch. f. Gesch. d. Med., 1953, XXXVII, 234; *idem*, *Paracelsus-Studien*, Klagenfurt, 1954, pp. 35 et seq.; *idem*, *Lichtsymbolik in philosophischer Weltanschauung, Mystik und Theosophie vom 15.–17. Jahrhundert*. Stud. Gen., 1960, XIII, 670–682 (p. 674).

¹¹⁴ On Nic. Cusanus see literature quoted by W. Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 1958, loc. cit., p. 199 and pp. 279–284.

¹¹⁵ See, for example, on Petrus Hispanus in this connexion: H. Schipperges, *Medizinischer Unterricht im Mittelalter*, Deut. Med. Wochschr., 1960, LXXXV, pp. 856–861. *Idem*, *Makrobiotik bei Petrus Hispanus*, Arch. f. Gesch. d. Med., 1960, XLIV, pp. 129–155. On the mediaeval and Renaissance tradition, see also: W. Pagel, *Religious Motives in the Medical Biology of the XVIIth century*, Bullet. Hist. Med., 1935, III, 97–312 (p. 220 on Patrizzi and light-symbolism).

of active impulses that are specific to each living being and notably man. In it he believed the same *Logos* to be operative as the cosmic—astral—force that “illuminates” the mind. It is a light immanent in cosmic life of which individual objects partake. Paracelsus consistently emphasized the superiority of the divine Light of the Spirit over the Light of Nature. Yet he could not avoid giving the latter a theological meaning, and finding in it, too, a divine gift—at all events at some periods in his life¹¹⁶. We mentioned above Paracelsus’ use of the concept to illustrate the perfection that is reached by the individual in his own time and in connexion with the Astra (see above, note 92). The various phases and versions of the Light of Nature in the work of Paracelsus have recently been fully investigated by Goldammer¹¹⁷.

The influence of mediaeval neo-Platonism may have reached Paracelsus in various ways. He knew Arnald of Villanova and Hildegard of Bermersheim, as we mentioned above¹¹⁸. He also knew the alchemical Lullists and John of Rupescissa. Miss Yates has shown recently how much of John Scotus Eriugena (9th century) can be found in Lull (1234–1315)¹¹⁹. Some of John’s positions can be correlated to Paracelsian ideas. To explain the coming into being of our phenomenal world, John tried to reconcile the neo-Platonic and the Christian point of view—with the result that the former prevailed. The world is seen

¹¹⁶ The interdependence of the Light of Nature and the Light of Grace is well expressed in Pseudo-Weigel, *Studium Universale*, cap. 1, ed. 1695, *loc. cit.*, sig. A2 verso and A3 recto: Our physical body is maintained by the earth. The firmament gives us all earthly wisdom, arts, languages, faculties (except Theology), offices and crafts. The spirit of God teaches us true theology, and through theology we learn astrology, magic, philosophy, physics, alchemy, arts and crafts . . . and although such things derive from the star, the Light of Nature must be kindled by the Light of Grace, that is by Christ, the Word of God, the Spirit of God that is in all things. The light of Nature is briefly called: *Astrologia* and that of Grace: *Theologia* (cap. 2). Similarly Simeon Partlicius of Spitzberg invoked both these lights as the way to knowledge and learning in chemistry. The sidereal spirit “attracts” all human wisdom, sciences and arts and crafts through the rays of the upper stars, whereby heaven is the father and teacher of all knowledge except theology which is taught by the Holy Spirit. The Light of Grace makes the true theologian, not however without philosophy. The Light of Nature makes the true philosopher, not however without theology which is the fundament of true wisdom. *Medici Systematis Harmonici . . . Prodromus*, Francof, 1625, p. 70.

¹¹⁷ K. Goldammer, *Lichtsymbolik in philosophischer Weltanschauung, Mystik und Theosophie vom 15. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*, *loc. cit.*, *Studium Generale*, 1960, XIII, pp. 670–682. This also contains a detailed account of Nic. Cusanus, Agricella, Seb. Franck, Weigel and Boehme.

¹¹⁸ See above, notes 93 and 94.

¹¹⁹ F. A. Yates, *Ramon Lull and John Scotus Erigena*, *J. Warburg and Courtauld Inst.*, 1960, XXIII, pp. 1–44.

as a process of emanation in which necessity seems to override free divine disposition. God is made to "descend" to the primordial causes and hence to the lower products of their *creative* activity¹²⁰. In order to explain how the immaterial God was able to effect material creation, John followed Gregory of Nyssa. The latter had regarded corporeal quality as primarily spiritual and only becoming perceptible through a secondary modification¹²¹. Finally John strove to demonstrate the *microcosmic* nature of man. The latter embraces all stages of created being, for he knows intuitively like an angel, reasons like man, perceives like an animal, is alive like a plant and exists with a body as well as a soul¹²². This position of man is closely associated with the idea of redemption. Man is eligible to it, as he represents the whole creation returning eventually to God¹²³. In this connexion we may recall the Gnostic view of microcosmic man created to replace another world—that of fallen Lucifer and his angels. In contrast to the latter man *qua* microcosm is accessible to redemption. Similar ideas can be found in Paracelsus and such Paracelsists as Croll and Böhme¹²⁴.

We mention these ideas as characteristic of mediaeval neo-Platonism in general. We have no evidence that they influenced Paracelsus directly. However, as Miss Yates puts it: Scotus Eriugena was "hidden in Lullism" and the latter was a strong source of inspiration for the Renaissance. Its influence on alchemy has always been obvious through the Pseudo-Lullians who correctly searched in Lull for "systems for calculating elemental influences which they proceeded to use and to adapt for their own purposes"¹²⁵. Moreover, in formulating his conception of *Chaos*, Lull shows striking similarities to John Scotus' ideas. In creating the elements the attributes, the "names" of God are instrumental: the elements are visualized as essences without bodily form. As *Igneitas*, *Aeritas*, *Aqueitas*, *Terreitas* they constitute the *Chaos*. Similarly John Scotus Eriugena had developed the late-Platonic idea that bodily qualities such as colour, gravity, consistency, quantity, size and form are spiritual determinations, not unlike the Aristotelian categories, belonging to the

¹²⁰ A. Schneider, *Die Erkenntnislehre des Johannes Eriugena im Rahmen ihrer metaphysischen und anthropologischen Voraussetzungen*, Berlin u. Leipzig, 1921–1923 (Part I), p. 15.

¹²¹ Schneider, *loc. cit.*, p. 17.

¹²² Schneider, *loc. cit.* (Part II), p. 74.

¹²³ Yates, *loc. cit.*, pp. 5 and 12.

¹²⁴ See the loci quoted in W. Pagel, *Paracelsus*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 205–207.

¹²⁵ Yates, *loc. cit.*, 1960, p. 41.

divine intellect¹²⁶. All this may remind us of the Paracelsian *Iliaster* and *Aquaster*—the ideal prelude of the created world. It is from the *Primordial Causes*, the *Logos*, that the *Chaos* of John Scotus emerges—the *Materia Informis* that also embraces space and time to give rise in turn to the four elements. At the top of the ladder we have God, the source of all, creating and not created, who is only definable by negative statements. He is followed by the attributes (“names”) of God: Bonitas, Essentia, Vita, Sapientia, Ratio and others. These constitute the *Primordial Causes*, the *Logos*. Though *created* themselves, they are *creative* in their turn. There follows the *Chaos* with space, time and the elements—created and not creating—and finally, again God to whom the All returns through redemption. This is the Scotist scheme of the four *Divisions of Nature* and essentially the platform from which the Lullian “tree of the elements” arises¹²⁷. Paracelsus’ speculation on Prime Matter which we followed up in detail, as an important part of his cosmology and natural philosophy, offers certain comparable aspects, for example the creation of the elements in prime matter (*Chaos*) as the first act through which heaven and earth are formed (see above, p. 144). On the other hand the term *Chaos* is introduced by Paracelsus in various meanings that are more remote from the conception of prime matter. Generally speaking *Chaos* stands for any medium or habitation from which an object derives its means of subsistence or certain qualities. There is for example a *chaos mineralis* that “leads and feeds immovable things”¹²⁸. It is from its *chaos* that urine derives its colour¹²⁹. Most consistently the term is used in connexion with air as the atmosphere surrounding the living being and providing the source of its life. It is the “*medium interstitium*” between heaven and earth, of a greenish transparency, almost invisible and of “miraculous clarity”. Fire, the globe of the earth, and water are suspended in it—“as yolk in the egg is held by the white”. It also feeds them, however; for example it feeds fire that may “hang” in the air¹³⁰. Such *chaos* is not only *on* the earth, but also *in* the earth, notably in mines where it may poison the miner by causing “*Bergsucht*”—miners’ disease¹³¹. Similarly it is found *in* the human body—it is the air that is dispersed throughout it, causing epilepsy when moved

¹²⁶ Yates, *loc. cit.*, p. 19.

¹²⁷ Yates, *loc. cit.*, p. 41.

¹²⁸ *Chaos mineralis: De modo pharmacandi*, lib. I, tr. 2, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IV, p. 448, and *Fragm. de modo pharmacandi*, lib. I, tr. 1, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IV, p. 473.

¹²⁹ *Kurtzes Büchlein de Urinis*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IV, p. 623.

¹³⁰ Paracelsus, *Philosophia de generationibus et fructibus quattro elementorum*, lib. I de elemento aeris cap. 10, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, p. 16.

¹³¹ Paracelsus, *Von der Bergsucht*, lib. I, tr. 1, cap. 2, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, p. 465.

violently, or fever when impeded in its movements¹³². It "feeds" the body being drawn from the air which is the specific "food" of the lung¹³³. Lying between heaven and earth it is governed by the stars and varies in its composition according to their will. Hence the seasonal changes of the chaos and its "fruit", for example dew (*tereniabin*), or skin pustules (as "fruit" of the inner chaos inside the body)¹³⁴. As a reflection on their astral origin Paracelsus also calls the *Arcana*—the original divine uncreated forces in nature—*Chaos. Arcanum*, he says, is a "chaos and can be directed by the *astra* like a feather by the wind" or "*arcana* that are virtue and power and hence are volatile and have no bodies and are chaos and are clear and transparent and subject to the star"¹³⁵. Perhaps it is only in this connexion with the arcana that reminiscences of the prime matter as an ideal prelude to creation can be found. For the arcana are presented as essentially spiritual—life giving—forces and magisterial ideas that direct the formation and function of concrete objects. The same could be said of the Three Principles—Salt, Sulphur and Mercury—which are in the first place such directing powers and only in a very late development finally become as it were crystallized or coagulated into the chemical substance with which we deal in the laboratory or household. We refer in this respect to the ideas of Quercetanus about the *Formal Simples* which we have discussed above (p. 137).

Among the *patristic* sources from which neo-Platonic speculation entered mediaeval philosophy, including John Scotus and Lull, St. Augustine stands in the first rank. It is tempting to find in him a source for Paracelsus, too. The latter mentions him once as the author of voluminous works¹³⁶. This is not much and we should not overrate the inclination and time for actual Augustinian studies which an itinerant physician and lay-theologian of Paracelsus' stamp would have. Nevertheless a few points of contact with Augustinian ideas must be mentioned. In the world of St. Augustine matter is formed according to a preceding ideal creation which is all and at once, and serves as the directive pattern for the concrete world that unfolds itself in time and space. Here

¹³² Paracelsus, *Scholia in lib. Paragraphorum*, De Caducis comment. in cap. 2, ed. Sudhoff, vol. V, p. 290. *Theoricae figurae univers. morbor.*, Tab. IX de febribus. *Febres ex aere* (cc) Oppilatum, ed. Sudhoff, vol. III, p. 453.

¹³³ Paracelsus, *Ursprung der frantzosen*, lib. II, cap. 2, ed. Sudhoff, vol. VII, p. 211.

¹³⁴ Paracelsus, *Blatern, leme, beulen . . . der frantzosen*, lib. III, cap. 8, ed. Sudhoff, vol. VI, p. 364. Chaos under astral influence: *Bergsucht*, lib. I, cap. 2, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, p. 465.

¹³⁵ Paracelsus on Arcana: *Paragranum*, tr. III von der alchimia, ed. Sudhoff, vol. VIII, p. 185. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹³⁶ Paracelsus, *Auslegung der Papstbilder*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 576 (to fig. XXVI).

again we meet the ideal *chaos*—the “seed of heaven and earth”, the receiving “womb” in which (rather than *out of* which) things are made¹³⁷. Paracelsus elaborated the idea of the elements as “wombs” and “mothers” in great detail, modifying the original Platonic and Augustinian idea in his own way. Prime matter is represented as the “seed of heaven and earth” by such Paracelsists as Croll and Quercetanus (see above, p. 148). We referred to the significance of the *Semina* in the whole doctrine of Paracelsus at some length (see above, p. 142). Indeed we are justified in speaking here of Augustinian motives. For it was St. Augustine who conceived of “seeds hidden in the corporeal elements of this world of all things that are bodily and visibly born”¹³⁸. These are “causal” and “primordial reasons” laid by God into the earth. Preformed and encompassed by these “seeds” all future denizens of the earth—plants, animals and men—wait to be called out in the course of time. Thus the earth is the mother of all living beings, the receptacle of its germinal forms, and the world is pregnant with the causes of all beings; it is like a grain of seed¹³⁹. The “seminal reasons” (*logoi*) watch over the objects stepping out from seminal potentiality into the actuality of the concrete object.

In these speculations St. Augustine is indebted to neo-Platonism and the idealistic version that it gave to the Stoic idea of the Pneuma as a “breath” of finest—ethereal—corporeality¹⁴⁰.

The same neo-Platonic influences are operative in Hellenistic and mediaeval alchemy and the latter may well be more intimately related to the world of Paracelsus than any of the original sources including St. Augustine. Indeed, Cumont’s *Disciples infidèles de Plotin* are the direct ancestors of Paracelsus¹⁴¹.

EPILOGUE: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NEO-PLATONIC AND Gnostic IDEAS IN THE WORK OF PARACELSUS AND ITS LIMITATION

The affiliation of Paracelsian speculation to neo-Platonism has often been mentioned in the many essays written on all aspects of Paracelsus’ life and work. This, however, is usually couched in general terms and without a detailed

¹³⁷ *De gen. c. Manich.*, I, 7, 11. See: H. Meyer, *Geschichte der Lehre von den Keimkräften*, Bonn, 1914, pp. 145–150. For the Platonic original of womb-symbolism in connexion with the *Chaos*: Timaeus 49A and 51A. F. M. Cornford, *Plato’s Cosmology. The Timaeus of Plato translated with running commentary*, London, 1937, pp. 177, 181.

¹³⁸ De Trinitate, III, 7, 13. Meyer, *loc. cit.*, p. 163.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 9, 16. Meyer, *loc. cit.*, p. 171.

¹⁴⁰ See Meyer, *loc. cit.*, p. 212 *et seq.*

¹⁴¹ E. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, London, 1958, p. 174.

account of the actual ideas that are consonant in both. More recently healthy warnings against overrating the contacts and parallels have been given, especially by Goldammer¹⁴². "Paracelsus is no dualist, hence he is no neo-Platonist". He saw spirit and matter united rather than separated by the gulf between good and evil, spirit and body, that Platonism and Gnosticism had erected. Again, Paracelsus insisted on the sharp division between God the creator, and the world—a division which was blurred in the emanative cosmos envisaged by neo-Platonism. Finally, the neo-Platonic vision of many worlds returning in succession to their origin, could not appeal to Paracelsus to whom the world was unique and single.

Further limitations have been suggested by Peuckert¹⁴³. He refers to the neo-Platonic catalogue of demons as elaborated by Trithemius and Agrippa, as against Paracelsus who reduced their multitudes to the comparatively short list of the Elemental Spirits (*Elementar-Geister*). However, just this belief in the elemental spirits has been made a cornerstone in the demonstration of Paracelsus' dependence upon his master Trithemius, by Jaques Gohory whose work was published in 1567¹⁴⁴. He was in no way prejudiced against Paracelsus. On the contrary, he was intent on propagating Paracelsism. What is more, he belonged to the first generation of Paracelsists, removed from the era of the master by no more than two decades. His testimony must therefore be taken seriously and regarded as closer to reality than anything we can say today.

Even so, we have no intention of disputing the originality of Paracelsus where he deviates from the neo-Platonic, Gnostic and alchemical tradition. The strong influence of the latter remains, however, and has been recognized by Goldammer as well as by Peuckert. We would add that Paracelsus elaborates Ficino's and Agrippa's ideas through observation and research into the working of nature. This appears to us as an extension of an existing tradition rather than as an embarkation on a new venture—a first attempt at "technical thinking", as Peuckert sees it. Contacts with Ficino go into "technical" detail in the work of Paracelsus, for example in his ideas on the plague¹⁴⁵. Like Ficino, Paracelsus enjoins us to find the ways of overcoming the evil influences of the stars by wisdom and moderation, especially in our emotional life, which is largely directed by the stars. To both—Ficino and

¹⁴² Goldammer, *Paracelsus. Natur und Offenbarung*, Hannover, 1953, pp. 33–35, 61–63.

¹⁴³ W.-E. Peuckert, *Pansophie. Ein Versuch zur Geschichte der weissen und schwarzen Magie*, 2nd ed., Berlin, 1956, pp. 200–206, 207–213 and *passim*. *Idem, Die grosse Wende—das apokalyptische Saeculum und Luther*, Hamburg, 1948, pp. 60, 426 et seq.

¹⁴⁴ *Paracelsi Compendium Leone Suavio auctore*, 2nd ed., Basileae, 1568, pp. 218–225.

¹⁴⁵ W. Pagel, *Paracelsus, loc. cit.*, 1958, pp. 176–178.

Paracelsus—the work of the physician belongs to the realm of “natural magic”. Beyond Paracelsus, this part of Ficino’s doctrine has deeply influenced medical theory—for example Fracastor’s ideas on the *contagium*. Ficino had defined infection as an attraction of like by like—a special case of that sympathy which rules throughout the cosmos, comparable to the response of a cord to the striking of another cord consonant with it¹⁴⁶. These contacts and parallels between Ficino and Paracelsus remain impressive, even if we find with Walker¹⁴⁷ that the tenor of Ficino’s “magic” is “whiter”, i.e. more spiritual than the “demonic” brand chosen by Trithemius, Agrippa and Paracelsus.

Moreover, Paracelsus was no systematic thinker, as Goldammer himself has pointed out. Hence we may hit upon Unitarian (monistic) as well as dualist, Theist as well as Pantheist, Christian as well as Heathen, materialist Stoic, as well as spiritualist, neo-Platonic, and Gnostic tendencies, in the work of Paracelsus. We refer to our discussion of the *Prima Materia*, the *Arcana* and related subjects.

Even this very combination of monist and dualist views may remind us of the neo-Platonic attempt at bridging the gulf between them.

Indeed it was *Platonicae Doctrinae* that inspired and informed Paracelsus. It was the *Prisca Philosophia*—the wisdom of the Magi of old, the Rabbis, the Kabbalists and Platonists, given to Adam by God Himself and on His command kept secret and transmitted orally in myths, fables and allegories. Thus we are told by the best of Paracelsian commentators: Peter Severinus (1542–1602) and the latter’s admirer William Davison the Scot (1593–ca. 1669). It is the *Hermetic Doctrine* which embraces “*Pyrotechnia*—the chemical art that operates by the aid of fire and makes the physician”¹⁴⁸.

Ever since the days of Erastus, Paracelsus has been accused of Gnostic heresy¹⁴⁹. This appertained not only to his cosmology and anthropology, but stigmatized even his ideas on disease, and such detailed views as the postulate of independent disease semina which invade man from outside. Other such views which we have mentioned refer to the *Cagastrum*—the deposits caused by coagulation of excretory matter, the products of corruption and spontaneous generation, the fruit of matter and evil prevailing over spirit and good.

¹⁴⁶ *Idem*, *ibid.*, pp. 182–183, note 153.

¹⁴⁷ D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, London, The Warburg Institute, 1958, pp. 41, 104 and *passim*.

¹⁴⁸ W. Davisson, *Commentariorum in sublimis Philosophi . . . Petri Severini Dani Ideam Medicinae Philosophicae propediem proditeturorum Prodromus*, Hagae Comitis, 1660, p. 31.

¹⁴⁹ Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 1958, *loc. cit.*, pp. 42–43, 204, 315.

There is, however, redemption from evil—liberation from disease as afforded by medicine, liberation from crude matter as provided by the chemist for the soul hidden in minerals and metals, succour and redemption brought to the human soul by “pneumatic man”, the *Magus* of the Gnosis, against the threatening *archons* that impede the ascent and reunion of the soul with its divine origin.

In the last resort, this liberating and redeeming act operates through a synthesis of the realms above with those below—and it was Paracelsus who attempted such a synthesis throughout all realms of Nature. In this we are inclined to see his uniqueness and originality. Taken as a whole this attempt is non-scientific and indeed a fruit of “Hermetic”, neo-Platonic and Gnostic speculation and practical work, the struggle of the Gnostic *magus* and Ficino’s priest-physician for the liberation of body and soul.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author’s thanks are due to the Wellcome Trust for encouragement and support of his work. He is also indebted to Professor J. R. Partington, Dr. F. N. L. Poynter, Mr. Allen Debus, Dr. Joseph Needham, F.R.S., Dr. O. Kurz and Dr. Frances A. Yates for most helpful suggestions.

(continued from 167)

the text incipit, 136, and for the prologue 703. See further TK 246, 343 (Thorndike, IV, 335); 720; Dorothea Waley Singer, *Catalogue of Latin and Vernacular Alchemical Manuscripts in Great Britain and Ireland* (Brussels 1928–31, 3 vols.), henceforth to be cited as DWS, I, no. 339; James Corbett, *Catalogue des manuscrits alchimiques Latins*, I (Brussels, 1939), *Manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de Paris*; II (Brussels, 1951), *Manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques des départements français*: these volumes henceforth to be cited as Corbett, I, 66, 125, 197; also *Ibid.*, I, 193, for a compendium of the work; and *Ibid.*, II, 43. There is also what appears to be a commentary on the work by Johannes Mohen in Cambridge Univ. 1256 (Ff.IV.13), a. 1528–29, fols. 105v.–165v. It there has a prol. “Studio namque florenti phisico. Investigavi radices principii . . .”. The text that follows opens: “Presens tractatus in theoricam et practicam dividitur . . .”.

TWO ALCHEMICAL MISCELLANIES: VATICAN LATIN MSS. 4091, 4092

BY PEARL KIBRE*

Two manuscripts of primarily alchemical tracts at the Vatican Library are of interest chiefly because their miscellaneous contents provide examples of several well known works along with a number of alchemical recipes. The two manuscripts: Vatican Latin 4091 and 4092¹, so far as can be ascertained, bear no certain relationship to each other, aside from the fact of their consecutive shelf marks. The first of them, Vatican 4091, of both paper and parchment, in varying hands of the 14th to 15th centuries, consists of one hundred and twenty-seven folios². It opens with an acephalous tract, designated in the margin as "Liber qui dicitur textus". This is further identifiable by the incipit, "Studio namque florenti phisico quandam philosophie partem secretam videlicet scientiam famosam inclitam gloriosam in sapientibus occultam . . .", as a tract elsewhere anonymous³, but attributed in the variant

* Hunter College, 695 Park Avenue, New York 21, N.Y.

¹ Both MSS. were examined at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, in July of 1937. They were again checked in 1951, and have since been verified by microfilms of the two MSS.

² The fols. are numbered I-III + 127, with numeration in the lower corner. At the close are two blank flyleaves. Fols. 101-126 are on parchment of the 14th century; the remainder are on paper of the late 14th or beginning 15th century. Fols. 1-100, 220 × 280 mm., is written in long lines in a semicursive hand. The ink is yellowed and the MS. is without ornamentation. The hand changes at fol. 54. Fols. 101-126, 185 × 28 mm., are in a 16th-century hand except for fols. 113, 122v., and 123v., which are part of a more recent restauration. The first initial (fol. 101) is in black ink with ornaments. There are numerous glosses except at fols. 54-98. The binding is in parchment without ornaments. I am indebted for assistance in the above description to Mlle Marthe DuLong.

³ A gloss beginning in the top margin and running along the right and lower margins reads: "Et scias quod glosator huius libri . . .".

For a description of the nature and contents of the work as well as other examples, see Lynn Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York, 1934), henceforth cited as Thorndike, III, 182, and Appendix 12, pp. 688-691, for headings of the tract in Paris, Bibl. Nat. 7149. Further MSS. may be noted in the work of Lynn Thorndike and Pearl Kibre, *A Catalogue of Incipits of Mediaeval Scientific Writings in Latin* (Mediaeval Academy of America, Cambridge, Mass., 1937), henceforth to be indicated as TK, under

(continued on page 166)

printed version to a Magister Valentinus⁴. As in other examples of this tract which have already been noted elsewhere, the text following the prologue begins, "Cum enim uniuscuiusque rei principium . . ."⁵. It is here further followed by a list of seventy-eight rubrics of the tract⁶.

The text of the above work in this manuscript is obviously a variant. It does not coincide with any other copies already noted of the work⁷. But they too differ from each other. A more careful comparison with the available manuscript copies of the work would appear to be essential before the order of the sections is determined. Until that is done, however, it may be of interest to note other characteristics of the text in this manuscript. Part one of the first book here closes with the pious ending ". . . et quod de ea in suis libris occultaverit et sermonibus philosophi nichil enim prodest occultatio philosophorum: in sermonibus ubi doctrina Sancti Spiritus operatur. Sit igitur nomen domini nostri Ihesu (*sic*) Christi benedictum et gloriose Virginis matris eius in eternum et ultra per infinita secula seculorum. Amen". This ending elsewhere, with some slight verbal differences, appears as the close of the treatise⁸. In this manuscript three blank folios intervene before the text resumes with the heading, "Liber primus, pars secunda de lapide minerali", with the opening words, "Quatuor autem species sunt neque plus neque minus que ad huiusmodi elixir convenient componendum . . ."⁹. The work closes apparently incomplete, ". . . sed non oportet quod illa vasa, in quibus fixantur, habeant colla longa, sicut vasa in quibus mercurius fixatur. Et sic finit opus Ieber

⁴ Lazarus Zetzner, *Theatrum chemicum* (Strasbourg, 1651-1661, 6 vols.), IV (1659), 941-954.

⁵ Vatican 4091, fol. iv.; and see TK 136, and the other references noted above in note 3.

⁶ Vatican 4091, fols. 3r.-4v. Following the close of the list of rubrics, the work continues. "Ait enim Archelaus in fine . . ."

⁷ See the references in note 3 above.

⁸ That is the close of part one, Vatican 4091, fol. 13r, is similar although not identical with the explicit of the entire work in Corbett I, 67, 198; and II, 44; also Zetzner IV, 954.

⁹ Fols. 13v.-16v. are blank. The text resumes at fol. 17r. A similar incipit "Quatuor autem sunt spiritus et non plures . . ." for a "Textus alchimie abbreviatus", is indicated as in Montpellier 479, 16th century, fols. 84v.-89v., by Corbett II, 104; and in Zetzner IV (1659), 912-934, with a different explicit, but entitled, "Practice vera alkimiæ per magistrum Ortholanium", and dated 1386.

quod multi experti probaverunt, nec potuerunt illud fine debito terminare. Amen”¹⁰.

The second treatise in the manuscript entitled “Tractatus domini fratris Alberti Episcopi Ratisponensis ordinis predicatorum”, is also identifiable by its incipit “Talentum mihi traditum negotiationis domini non abscondam ne maledictionem consequar . . .” as the “Compositio de compositiis”, which is found in numerous examples and is usually attributed to Albertus Magnus¹¹.

Following the explicit of the preceding tract is a series of alchemical verses, designated as “Centum versus”, but actually comprising one hundred and twelve of them, of which the first three lines and the explicit read as follows:

Fili doctrinam sanam tibi porrigo binam
 Summum thesaurum tene mente dum foris aurum
 Sic amplexare tibi ne dominetur avare
 / . . .
 Ars complementum sub versibus hiis, cape centum, Explicit capitulum.
 Deo gratias. Amen¹².

Among the remaining tracts in the manuscript, as already noted by Dr. A. G. Little, there are transcribed in a hand later than that of the other works, several tracts under the name of Roger Bacon. They comprise the “De arte experimentali. Idem de potestate artis et naturae. Idem de retardanda senectute. Idem de magnete”¹³. The second of these tracts is the only one

¹⁰ Vatican 4091, fol. 42r. The work is obviously incomplete. A note in a hand slightly later than the preceding adds that the text continues at fol. 17, but this no longer appears to apply.

¹¹ Vatican 4091, fols. 43r.-48v. For other notices and MSS. of this work of which I am preparing an edition, see my article “Alchemical writings ascribed to Albertus Magnus”, *Speculum* XVII (1942), 506-507; and “Further Manuscripts containing alchemical tracts attributed to Albertus Magnus”, *loc. cit.*, XXXIV (1959), 245. See also Corbett I, 56, where the work is erroneously confused with the *Semita recta*; also Corbett II, 32, 123. The work was printed in a somewhat variant version in Zetzner IV (1659), 825-841.

¹² Vatican 4091, fols. 48v.-49r. For other examples of these verses see TK 265; also Bologna Univ. 270 (457), X, 3, pp. 1 ff.; Florence, Laurenziana Ashburnham 1451 (1374), fols. 58v.-61r.; Munich, Stadtbibl. CLM 276, 14th century, f. 92. There are some verbal differences between the text in the Vatican MS. and that noted by DWS no. 824.

¹³ Vatican 4091, fols. 50-52 are blank. At fol. 53r., in a hand of the 16th century the above titles are indicated. Below the titles is the statement: “excripsit ex opere pergameno” and below the title: “Liber rarus”.

For the “De arte experimentali”, fols. 54r.-67v., *<inc. >* “Positis radicibus sapientie . . .” see TK 495; A. G. Little (ed.), *Roger Bacon Commemoration*

of alchemical content. It has been summarily noted by Dr. Little¹⁴. But, since he gives few details for this variant version, a more detailed description may not be amiss. After the above title, the work opens, "Vestre petitioni respondeo in primis quod hec scientia currit(?) modo speculative fit(?) experimentalis revolvendo omnis sensus et modos librorum magicorum et fraudes eorum . . .". It thus differs after the first three words from other examples, although in general the context appears the same. The explicit: "contra febres et passiones animis (*sic*) et cordis vilior quocumque hec tibi rescrit habebit clavem qui aperit et nemo claudit et cum clauerit nemo aperiet etc." also differs verbally from that found elsewhere but the context is similarly the same¹⁵.

On the last of the folios containing the works of Roger Bacon, there is a list of the titles and some incipits of the separate books of the "Liber Septuaginta"¹⁶ attributed to Geber, and here following in the manuscript, although without any author's name attached. The first book opens: <rubric> "Incipit liber Divinitatis qui est unus de septuaginta, <incipit> Laudes sint Deo habenti gratiam et bonitatem et pietatem et misericordiam, qui donavit nobis rem quam

¹⁴ See in preceding note.

¹⁵ For other examples of the work, see TK 771; also Cambridge Univ. 1255 (Ff.IV.12), a. 1528, fols. 257v.-275v. Although the text printed in Zetzner V (1660), 844-861, "Epistola Fratris R. Baconis, De secretis operibus artis et naturae et de nullitate magicae", varies considerably from that in the MS., the explicit is practically the same. See also Little, *loc. cit.*, pp. 395-396.

¹⁶ Vatican 4091, fols. 99r.-101r. On fol. 99v. there is a fragment of a letter sent to a "Reverendissimo in Christo patri et domino meo singularissimo domino P divinae Dei providentia sancte romane ecclesie tituli sancti Marchi presbytero cardinali". Only the last line of the letter remains: "scriptum Ruthene non manu propria XXI die mensis Novembbris". The blank sections of the fols. contain the list of books of the *Septuaginta*.

¹⁸ *continued*

Essays (Oxford, 1914), 384-385; and the *Opus maius*, pars VI, *Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi*, 1928, IX, xvi.

The "De potestate artis et nature eiusdem", <inc.> "Vestre petitioni respondeo . . .", Vatican 4091, fols. 67v.-76r., was noted by Little, *op. cit.* (1914), pp. 395-396; and *Opera hactenus inedita*, 1928, IX, xvi.

For the *De retardanda senectute*, <inc.> "[H]omines (for Domine?) mundi qui ex nobili bona stirpe . . .", Vatican 4091, fols. 76r.-93r., col. 1, see TK 218; Little, *op. cit.* (1914), 399-400; and *Opera hactenus inedita*, (1928) IX, xvi, the short version of the "Epistola". Chap. I here opens "Mundo senescente . . .".

The *De magnete*, <inc.> "Amicorum intime quandam magnetis lapidis . . .", Vatican 4091, fols. 93v.-98r., is Pierre de Maricourt, *De magnete*. See TK 39; *Opera hactenus inedita* (1928), IX, xvi.

non meruimus apud eum et tribueret nobis . . ."¹⁷. After a section which was restored at the close of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th century, and on which were recopied some sections that were lacking¹⁸, the work closes abruptly in the "Liber fiducie"¹⁹, *<incipit>* "Iam preterierunt libri apud nos ad appropinquandum tempus preparationis lapidis maioris . . ./ . . *<explicit>* distilletur cum oleo propter fortitudinem ignis evagentem (*sic*) ei et eorum convenientia".

Also interpolated in the above folios *<at folio 124>*, there is a recipe in thirty-eight lines entitled "Liber rebis", and opening: "Recipe rebis qui nascitur in duobus montibus . . . et aqua predicta rectificat omnes lapides id est plumbum iovem et lunam"²⁰.

The second manuscript: Vatican 4092, is largely of paper, with the exception of two folios at the beginning which are in parchment. It belongs to the late 14th or early 15th century and is numbered, after folios 3 to 27, in Roman numerals contemporary with the manuscript²¹. The folios 3 to 26 contain a table of the contents *<from folio VIII of the early enumeration, to folio CCL>*. The end of the table is lacking. However, included in the table is a list of all

¹⁷ Vatican 4091, vols. 101r., col. 1-126r., col. 2. The work here is on parchment in a hand, possibly English, of the first part of the 15th century. For Geber, *Liber Septuaginta*, translated by Gerard of Cremona, see the edition by Berthelot from Paris, Bibl. Nat. 7156, in *Archéol. et hist. des sciences* (1906), 310-363; also J. Ruska, *Lippmann Festschrift* (1927), pp. 39-47. See also DWS nos. 74-102; TK 383; Corbett I, 73, 98; and British Museum Add. 41486, fols. 21-26.

¹⁸ Vatican 4091, fols. 120-126 were restored probably at the beginning of the 15th century, with pieces of parchment, on which were recopied the parts that were missing. The text continues from 123v. to 125r.

¹⁹ For the "Liber fiducie qui est 9 (14, or 29) de 70", see DWS I, nos. 80, 91; TK 308.

²⁰ No other examples of this recipe have so far appeared.

²¹ It is numbered fols. I-II, 3-27, then I-CCLXXXIII; 215 × 295 mm. Fols. 3-282v. are all in the same hand (probably North Italian), in two columns. Fols. CCLXXXIII to CCLXXXII are in another hand in two columns. The gatherings are of 24 fols.; the first are marked by a letter in the lower margin of the first page toward the right (A to F). There is no indication of provenance. The binding is in calf. On the back are the arms of Pius IX and of Cardinal Lambruschini.

The preliminary material at fols. I-II, in parchment of the 14th century, comprises a legal formulary. There is reference to property at Mutina or Modena and there are a number of Italian proper names. At the upper margin of the first of the leaves (in a 15th-century hand) is written "Magister Iohannes Andreas de pi . . . gnariis de Pad. emi hunc librum a domino Pol. pro d. ribus presente magistro Francesco de Pensauro 1444".

the recipes with reference to the folios, but not always in the order in which they now appear in the manuscript.

Following after the table of contents the codex comprises several well-known works: the *Semita recta*, or *De alchimia*, attributed to Albertus Magnus, with the usual incipit: "Omnis sapientia a Domino Deo est et cum ipso fuit semper et est ante aevum . . ." but differing in the explicit from other examples: ". . . et cum labor in damno. Iam satis dictum est de preceptis. Serva et custodi"²². Next in the manuscript is an alchemical tract attributed to Roger Bacon and elsewhere identified as the "Breve breviarum". It is here entitled, "Liber fratris Rogerii Baconi de naturis metallorum et transformatione ipsorum", and opens as do other examples, but has a variant explicit: "Ars alchimia duo principaliter considerat, videlicet corpora metallorum infirma . . . / . . . <explicit> et mutationis optinet principatum quare de ipso principaliter est agendum etc."²³.

Next there is an extract from a commentary on Book IV of the Meteorology by Albertus Magnus²⁴: "Tractatus Alberti Magni ad literam in libro Metaurorum quarto et capitulo eiusdem octavo. <Incipit> Non enim negavimus hoc quot (*sic*) dicunt alkamici (*sic*) scilicet quot de omni re trahatur oleum vitrum (*sic*) . . . / . . . <explicit> quiescere erit incineratum, et eius cinis erit albus et similis calci".

The above extract is followed in turn by the "Liber perfecti magisterii et primo racio huius artis; audi et intellige et sis sollicitus"²⁵. This work which is elsewhere variously attributed to Aristotle, Geber, Rasis, and even Albertus Magnus²⁶, is here suggested as by "Arnoldus" in a hand later than the rest of

²² Fols. I.ra.-VIIIr.a. The title is in the margin in a humanist hand. For other copies of the work, of which I am preparing an edition, *Speculum* XVII (1942), 511-515; and *Ibid.*, XXXIV (1959), 238-244; also Zetzner II (1659), 423-458, may be consulted.

²³ Fols. VIIIr.a.-XVIIr.b. For other MSS. which appear to vary especially in the explicit, see TK 60; Little (1914), 396-397; DWS no. 191, v; also Corbett I, 184. See also TK 62, under "Ars principaliter duo . . .".

²⁴ Fols. XVIIr.b.-XVIIIr.a.; *Opera omnia* (ed. Borgnet, Paris, 1830), IV, 738-761, col. 2, Lib. IV, tract. II, cap. 8-761, col. 2, in cap. X.

²⁵ Fols. XVIIIr.a.-LXXXr.b.

On fol. LXVIIIv.b, there is a recipe: "Sublimatio arsenici citrini secundum fratrem Thomam de Aquino".

²⁶ TK 160, under the incipit "Cum studii solertis indagine . . ."; Corbett I, 28-30, 97, 109; II, 100; DWS 114; Thorndike III, 651; also Geneva 82, 16th century, fols. 134r.-144v.; and anon. Florence, Bibl. naz. Pal. 981, 15th century, fols. 211r.-36r.; Munich Stadtbibl. CLM 405, fols. 67v.-73r.; and Vatican Pal. 1328, fols. 35r.-39r., with incipit "Quoniam studii solertiis . . .".

the text. The incipit "Cum solerti indagine universarum rerum artificia filosofia comperierit sedulitate, tamen, karissime fili . . ." is similar, although not identical with other examples, but the explicit "et incorporentur quot sit unum. Finit hic etc. etc.(?)". varies considerably²⁷.

Less well known than the above is the next tract on alchemical processes: "Incipit doctrina magistri Leonardi de reductionibus corporum calcinatis(*sic*)²⁸. <Incipit> Cum enim calcem ♂ <solis> vel ♀ <lune> que remanet . . ." Part II then follows: "Incipit secunda pars que tractat de incineratione spirituum corporum et salium. <Incipit> Ex salibus est inscidar sublimatus . . ."

The succeeding folios in the manuscript are made up of a series of recipes which are of interest because of the names of individuals associated with them. The first of these recipes may be a selection from some longer work since it opens: "In nomine Dei omnipotentis eterni amen. Nota bene. Hoc est capitulum cuiusdam maximi secreti in scientia nostra alkemie ad veram et probatam congelationem mercurii quam attulit ultra mare frater Nicolaus de ordine Hospitaliorum Sancti Iohannis . . ."²⁹. Then follow: "Congelatio . . . per me Iohannem"³⁰; "Fixio mercurii secundum dominum Gasparum . . ."³¹; "Torquena(?) perfecta probata per magistrum Rugerium de Brandellis ad album"³²; Albatio Odowardi³³; a recipe "secundum dominum Antonium de Anccona"³⁴; Dulcuratio ♂ ♀ <solis lune> secundum magistrum Abraham Ermenum³⁵; "Receptum probatum per egregium dominum Gasparrum doctor(*sic*) iuris Parisiensis"³⁶; Opus magni(*sic*) domini Iohannis Gnamundi"³⁷; "Opus regis ungarie"³⁸; "Capitulum Raymundi fratris Guanfredi minister(*sic*) generalis ordinis minorum ad ♂ <solem> et ad ♀ <lunam>"³⁹; "Dealbatio

²⁷ See the above references especially DWS 114; and Corbett I, 28–30.

²⁸ Vatican 4091, fols. LXXXr.b-LXXXIIIr.a. No other examples of this work have so far been located.

²⁹ Fols. LXXXIVv.b-LXXXVr.a.

³⁰ Fol. CVIIIf.v.a.

³¹ Fol. CVIIIf.v.b.

³² Fol. CXXR.b.

³³ Fol. CXXVIIr.b.

³⁴ Fol. CXXXIIIf.v.a.

³⁵ Fol. CXXXIIIf.v.a.

³⁶ Fol. CXLIIf.v.a.

³⁷ Fol. CXLVIv.b.

³⁸ Fol. CXLVIIr.b.

³⁹ Fol. CXLVIIIr.b.

quam habuit verus a familia regis Anglie"⁴⁰; "Albatio domini Jacobi de Palermo"⁴¹; "Alia secundum fratrem Johannem de Mantua ordine(sic) minorum"⁴².

Next there follow two more longer treatises. The first is a work of Friar Helias, "Incipit liber fratri Helie intitulatus Vade mecum"⁴³, with opening words similar to those found elsewhere: "Cum infrascriptis aquis distillationibus . . ." but with a somewhat different explicit, ". . . quorum effectu si non ignoras satis nosti". The second is an *Alkimia* elsewhere attributed to Pseudo Aristotle, but here anonymous: "Incipit liber pietatis notabilia etc. <incipit> Audi aure cordis que dico et in corde tuo quasi in libro scribe . . ./ . . . <explicit> semper ylarus (sic) iuvenemque reddit ei faciem et benedictus sit Deus vivus verus qui dedit sapientiam sapientibus"⁴⁴.

Several more recipes follow⁴⁵. They are ascribed as before to various individuals: "secundum magistrum Odowardum cementum"⁴⁶; "secundum magistrum Odowardum tinctura super ♂ <solem> et pondus"⁴⁷; "super ♂ <solem> probatum et verum secundum Aristotilem"⁴⁸. "Augumentatio ♂ <solis> probatum per fratrem Iohannem Teutonicum"⁴⁹; "capitulum faciens rubeum et ponderosum secundum Rogerium filosofum"⁵⁰; "ad ♂ <solem> secundum magistrum Iohannem de Monte Nigro⁵¹"; "pulcrum negocium verum probatum per quandam nobilem de Francia⁵²". "Recepte quas habui ab egregio domino G. de Insule Paridis"⁵³; "receptum domini G. de insule Paridis"⁵⁴; "Experimentum

⁴⁰ Fol. CLIIIv.a. It appears again at fol. CLVIIv.a.

⁴¹ Fol. CLXVIIIv.a.

⁴² Fol. CLXXXIIr.b.

⁴³ Fols. CLXXXIIIv.a.-CLXXXXIr.a. It is not clear whether the series of recipes that follow the incipit are actually part of the work of Helias or not. On Helias, see Thorndike, III, 347; DWS I, no. 172; III, no. 1131; and TK 133, under "Cum de infrascriptis . . .".

⁴⁴ Fols. CLXXXIIR.a.-CLXXXXVIIr.a. See further TK 71; also anon. in DWS no. 675; and in Cambridge Univ. 1255 (Ff.IV.12), a. 1528, fols. 38r.-43r.

⁴⁵ Fol. CLXXXVII.

⁴⁶ Fol. CCXXIXv.a.

⁴⁷ *Idem*.

⁴⁸ Fol. CCXXXr.a.

⁴⁹ Fol. CCXXXIVv.b.

⁵⁰ Fol. CCXXXVIIr.a.

⁵¹ Fol. CCXLIIIIv.a.

⁵² Fol. CCXLVIv.b.

⁵³ Fol. CCXLVIIIr.b.

⁵⁴ Fol. CCLIr.a.

domini Marchionis de Tolusio verum super ♂ <solem>⁵⁵; "Opus magistri Rudicum(?) filosofi moderni"⁵⁶; "Opus magnum domini Johannis diastiri⁵⁷ de Anglia"; "Opus magnum regis Friderici siculani"⁵⁸; "aliud domini abbatis"⁵⁹; "Crocis ♀ <lune> verum et probatum per dominum Gasparum de Padoa"⁶⁰. The collection closes with a recipe for "sal armoniacum"⁶¹.

Still another series of recipes of which some are in Italian, follow in the manuscript. The first is alchemical⁶²; the second is a formula or conjuration to apprehend a thief⁶³; and a third in Italian is probably medical⁶⁴.

The foregoing recipes are succeeded by other tracts: a "Synonima alkimie <incipit> Aer ventus, aqua liquor, adeps est illud . . . / . . . <explicit> Zoor id est Saturnus. Zohra id est venus"⁶⁵; a table of signs of Albumasar for the zodiac; and for the planets, together with the corresponding metals, and the signs used for these and other metals⁶⁶.

At the close of the manuscript there is still another recipe, in a cursive hand, "Experimentum ad fixandam lunam quod ego probavi in Castello . . ."⁶⁷.

It may thus be concluded that the tracts contained in the two manuscripts described above are for the most part well known alchemical works whose alleged authors belong largely to the preceding centuries. These are, for example, for Latin authors, the *Compostio des compostis*, and the *Semita recta*, attributed to Albertus Magnus; two alchemical tractates of Roger Bacon; the *Vade mecum*, ascribed to Friar Helias; and the incomplete text of the work best known by its incipit, "Studio namque florenti . . .". In addition there is included a tract on alchemical processes by an otherwise unknown Leonardus.

⁵⁵ Fol. CCLVv.a.

⁵⁶ Fol. CCLVIIv.a.

⁵⁷ Fol. CCLVIIIv.a.

⁵⁸ Fol. CCLXIIr.a.

⁵⁹ Fol. CCLXIIv.b.

⁶⁰ Fol. CCLXVIv.a.

⁶¹ Fol. CCLXXXIIv.a.

⁶² Fol. CCLXXXIIv., of the end of the 14th century, or beginning 15th century.

⁶³ Fol. CCLXXXIIIr.-v.

⁶⁴ Fol. CCLXXXIIIv. There is a proper name that is not entirely legible: "Maestro Berto Geno. in Zenee(?)".

⁶⁵ Fols. CCLXXXIIIr.a.-CCLXXXIv.a.

⁶⁶ Fol. CCLXXXIIr.a. Fol. CCLXXXIIv. is blank.

⁶⁷ Fol. CCLXXXIIr.

Especially, too, in the second manuscript, there are a large number of alchemical recipes with proper names, for the most part, of European persons. Of non-Latin authors, presumably, are the several books of the *Septuaginta*, usually attributed to Geber; the here anonymous *De perfectu magisterii*, also elsewhere attributed to Geber, Rasis, or to Pseudo Aristotle, and another alchemical tract, here anonymous, although elsewhere attributed also to Pseudo Aristotle. The two manuscripts are therefore good examples of alchemical miscellanies, made up of works current in the 14th to the early 16th centuries, and collected apparently by some enterprising alchemist for his own information and use.

LIST OF INCIPITS INCLUDED IN THE TWO MSS.: VATICAN 4091 AND 4092

(numbering references are to notes covering the incipits)

Aer ventus aqua liquor . . .	n. 65	Iam preterierunt libri . . .	n. 19
Amicorum intime quandam . . .	n. 13	In nomine dei omnipotentis . . .	n. 29
Ars alchimia duo principi- paliter . . .	n. 23	Laudes sint deo habenti . . .	n. 17
Audi aure cordis qui dico . . .	n. 44	Mundo senescente	n. 13
Cum enim calcem solis . . .	n. 28	Non enim negavimus hoc quod . . .	n. 24-25
Cum enim uniuscuiusque rei . . .	n. 5	Omnis sapientia a domino . . .	n. 22
Cum infrascriptis aquis . . .	n. 43	Positis radicibus . . .	n. 13
Cum solerti indagine . . .	n. 26-27	Quatuor autem species . . .	n. 9
Domine mundi qui ex nobili . . .	n. 13	Recipe rebris qui nascitur . . .	n. 20
Fili doctrinam sanam tibi . . .	n. 12	Reverendissimo in Christo . . .	n. 16
Homines (for Domine?) mundi . . .	n. 13	Studio namque florenti . . .	n. 3
		Talentum mihi traditum . . .	n. 11
		Vestre petitioni . . .	n. 13,15

REVIEWS

Alchimie: Sinn und Weltbild. By TITUS BURCKHARDT. Pp. 230, with 12 plates and many illustrations in the text. Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau: Water Verlag, 1960. Price Sw. Frs. 16.80.

At last we have a book that places the alchemical problem into a proper focus. The learned author, an eminent scholar and intimately acquainted with the philosophic and mystical writers of the Islamic consensus, looks at alchemy from within, as it were, and not from without. Since Descartes and Leibnitz the alchemical tradition has been subject to the scrutiny of the rationalistic mind and the result has been disastrous. On the one hand, we have many books on the subject written from the "esoteric" point of view by authors whose ignorance may be pardoned because they mean well; and, on the other hand, we have the "scientific" approach. The excellent and informative books of Dr. Jung and his associates are written, quite naturally, from the point of view of modern psychological interpretation; Dr. Burckhardt, however, stands in the middle of the stream of alchemical tradition, his views are not obscured or deflected by the "modern scientific approach" because he has had the advantage of living for some years among thinking men in whom the ancient tradition of alchemy could not be influenced by our modern superficial way of thinking: I refer here to the Sufi orders, one of which admitted our author to its membership. It is time that we revised our judgment of the great philosophers of Islam; they are not "stuck fast" in the mediaeval tradition, which deals always with fundamentals; they have merely never renounced the fact that certain fundamentals of the human mind and of the spirit are here for ever and must be recognized as being present in the progress of human life, and especially if this life is regarded as the Great Experiment. This is exactly what alchemy professes to be, an experimental ontology with certain rules and a certain technique. It is the philosophic aspect of the rules that Dr. Burckhardt discusses in his book.

To begin with, it stands to reason that a tradition, such as this alchemical tradition, that has lasted for several thousand years and can be found under almost identical aspects in every civilized country, ancient and modern, such a tradition simply cannot be based on self-deception. The researches of Dr. Jung and his school, for which the serious student must be eternally grateful, seem to miss the point when they place alchemical symbolism into the "sub-conscious". These symbols should be regarded as ingredients of the "super-conscious", which allows the spirit unlimited possibilities, and where there is no danger of confusing morbid phenomena with the milestones of Light along the path to fulfilment. It must be said, however, that in the "Mysterium Coniunctionis" Dr. Jung has considerably modified his former point of view; especially in his masterly interpretation of Dorneus, a forgotten metaphysician of the 16th century.

Dr. Burckhardt stresses the intimate connection of the macro- and microcosmos in the mind of archaic man. Metallurgy was a mystery; the extraction of ore from the "womb" of the earth and the refining process by means of fire was ominous and full of dangerous possibilities. Spirit and matter were not separate; hence the refining of ores was bound to be not only a marvellous

discovery but was a gift from the Gods and, as such, it was also an act of revelation. As the ore was refined, in spite of the chaotic and opposing forces of Nature, so could the "soul" be cleansed from the dark and unfathomable instincts with which it was surrounded and turned into the pure bright silver or gold which the metallurgist had succeeded in extracting from the impure ore.

There is no doubt that this metallurgical concept has become so fixed in the human mind that it forms a pattern within which human aspirations are, or, at least, were expressed. So here we have the alchemical theory in its inception: the improvement of nature by means of a manipulation-technique, which gives the operator the power—to use the old alchemical phrase—"to superimpose nature on nature", to change the sequence of the creative process, to "short-cut" this process. The operator can produce the purest gold, such as does not exist in nature, and at the same time he can apply the refining technique to the course of his own life and reach a point where he becomes an "initiate", one who has been allowed to catch a glimpse of God.

This refining process was bound to be secret and therefore later ages attributed the origin of alchemy, according to Dr. Burckhardt, to the secret wisdom of the Egyptian priests. We must allow that the institution of the priesthood in Egypt is possibly the most ancient, older even than that of Sumer, Akkad and Elam, with an unbroken tradition of priest-craft, the origin of which goes back to a mythical past, a golden age. The Hellenistic corpus of texts, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, compiled by the legendary Hermes-Thoth (Hermes Trismegistos), is almost entirely alchemical in content and there is a further fact that many of the technical "secrets", which have come down to us in the European alchemical writings, are without doubt of Egyptian origin. It was in Alexandria, that melting-pot of cosmologies, where the European tradition of alchemy assumed its final form; and it is here, according to Dr. Burckhardt, that alchemy divided itself into a metallurgical craft on the one hand, and into a teleological discipline on the other hand, that uses the metallurgical processes merely as symbols of progress on the path to spiritual fulfilment. Both traditions, however, are only two facets of the "archaic" inheritance. With the advent of Christianity, alchemy became something like a natural mirror of the revealed truth: the *Lapis Philosophorum*, which could transform common metals into gold or silver, was a likeness of Christ, and its generation out of the "non-burning fire" of sulphur and the "constant water" of mercury was similar to the birth of Christ-Emmanuel. In Islam the adaption of alchemy to the ruling faith was even more complete. Islam recognizes any pre-Islamic "art" that had to do with the tradition of wisdom—*hikmah*—as an inheritance coming from former prophets. So, in Islam, Hermes Trismegistos is very often thought of as being the same as Henoah (Idris). It is the doctrine of the "oneness of all being" (*wahdat-al-wujūd*), the esoteric interpretation of the Islamic faith, which gave to Hermeticism a new spiritual axis; or, to be more precise, gave back to alchemy its original spiritual horizon and tore out the brambles of late Hellenism.

Dr. Burckhardt thinks that European alchemy since the Renaissance has become a piecemeal tradition, a spiritual "art" without the proper metaphysical background, and this is supposed to be true especially of alchemy in the 18th

century. We should like to take issue with the author here. Later alchemy must be regarded from the point of view of an ancient tradition fighting a losing battle against the coming scientific and technocratic madness of which many alchemical authors were aware. Alchemy in the 18th century was a kind of last brilliance of endeavour; old texts were carefully re-edited, the alchemical writers all seemed to know of one another, and a last great effort was made to explain alchemy to a public that was no longer interested. It is also not generally known that many of the better-known alchemists of the 18th century had gone to Fez, and received the end of the thread that had been broken off.

Dr. Burckhardt emphasizes the ancient doctrine of opposites which takes the form of the opposition of sulphur and mercury in alchemy, the basis of the whole alchemical process. He mentions the picture of the universe as given by Ptolemy, which was taken over by Dante, with its spheres of sublimation through which the soul must ascend to where time and eternity are one. It does not matter in the least if the Ptolemaic picture has no "scientific" validity; as a pattern and a guide for human spiritual aspirations there has been none better and more precise. It is this pattern that is taken for granted in very many alchemical works and the key to their interpretation.

Great care is taken to explain the alchemical doctrine of the four elements. Dr. Burckhardt refers to the Indian system of the Sankhya. The "bhutas" are the physical elements that belong to the corporeal world and there is an equal number of "opposite" elements in the "knowing subject", as many unchangeable "measures of being", called the "tanmâtras". Both groups of archetypal elements, the "bhutas" and the "tanmâtras", in the last analysis derive from "prakriti", the "materia prima", and are differentiated through "ahankâra", the principle of individuation, into objective and subjective poles of the world as conceived by mind. This description is exactly similar to the doctrine of the elements as taught by the Hermetic teachers, except that Greek terms are substituted. The Hermetic tradition states that the natural order of the elements can be portrayed either as a cross, the centre of which is the *Quinta Essentia*; or as concentric circles; or as the "seal of Solomon", where the triangle pointing upward represents fire, the triangle pointed downward represents water, and the two strokes made by the interlacing triangles are earth and air. The seal of Solomon, therefore, represents the synthesis of all the elements and thus the unification of all opposites.

The chapter on planets and metals is of especial interest. It can be briefly summarized as follows. The alchemical myth of King Gold—the sun—who must be killed and buried so that he can awaken to a new life and attain his fulfilment by transcending the seven "rulers" (planets), is the alchemical interpretation of the ancient symbolical universe of astrology. The latter, however, is the cosmic picture of an inner system of opposites. The sun is in man the divine spark, that seemingly dies when the spirit enters the house of Saturn, but is reborn and ascends the seven phases of consciousness to become the "red lion", the Great Elixir that can transform the world.

Dr. Burckhardt quotes Ibn 'Arabi: the world of nature consists of many and differentiated forms, which are reflected in one mirror; no, it is rather that the world of nature is one form, reflecting herself in many mirrors. Here we have

the key, according to the alchemists, for the understanding and the unfolding of the spiritual meaning of phenomena. Let us think of the pattern of the elements and the natural properties of matter as a cosmic wheel, the rim of which is the path of the sun and the four spokes are the four directions of the heavens. The alchemists think of the hub of the wheel as the "quinta essentia". This can mean either the spiritual pole of all four elements or their common material basis, the ether, in which they are all contained in undifferentiated form. In order to regain the centre, the hub of the wheel, the differentiation of the elements must be reconciled, the water must be made fiery, air must be fluid, earth must be without weight and air must be made solid. Here the alchemist leaves the plane of physical phenomena and enters the sphere of inner alchemy.

As the alchemist progresses he gradually realizes and experiences the union of spirit and matter. Beyond this point, as Dr. Burckhardt rightly points out, the meaning of the alchemical process can only be revealed in suggestions and symbols. Here the author explains that the "materia prima" is not the "collective unconscious" but the "patient basis" of all cognition; the reflection of the "original spirit", that is, in the realm of ideas in the Platonic sense, of truth itself. The "materia prima" can be regarded as the mirror of the "world-soul". On the back of Chinese magic mirrors can be found a representation of the celestial dragon, the Logos. The sacred mirror is the symbol of the spirit in its sacred purity, in which state it can absorb super-rational and original truth. This is identical with the alchemical conception of the "prima materia" as the substructure of the spirit, which, when purified, gives the spirit the possibility of union with God.

Dr. Burckhardt has placed before us in masterly fashion the pattern of alchemy, but it is the metaphysical or, in modern idiom, the "para-physical" pattern. We are shown that traditional alchemy, far from being a despised subject, is a tradition that deals with the fundamentals of *being*; without a knowledge of such fundamentals, mankind must flounder on.

G. H.

Bacstrom's Alchemical Anthology. Edited and with an Introduction by J. W. HAMILTON-JONES. Pp. 152, with three plates. London: John M. Watkins, 1960. Price 30s.

AMONG the remarkable personages in late 18th- and early 19th-century Rosicrucianism, some information regarding Dr. Sigismund Bacstrom and his alchemistic "Father", Comte Louis de Chazal, is to be found in A. E. Waite's *The Real History of the Rosicrucians*, 1887, and *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, 1924. Mr. Hamilton-Jones has admittedly drawn on these sources in his introduction to the book under notice, but he has also made use of the additional information that is contained in "some of the manuscripts to which Mr. Waite refers as being jealously guarded in Theosophical hands". We learn that although Bacstrom translated many treatises on Alchemy from the German, French and Latin, into English, as well as making his own contributions to the subject, apparently he did not publish any of his writings. It is interesting to note that in 1797, he made a translation of *Aurea Catena Homeri*,—incidentally, one of the alchemical texts studied by Goethe; and that in February, 1891, H. P. Blavatsky began the publication of Bacstrom's translation, as a serial, in the Theosophical monthly

magazine, *Lucifer*: "the publication of the instalments was discontinued owing, probably, to the death of Blavatsky which occurred at about that time".

In the ensuing pages of the present book, Mr. Hamilton-Jones gives us the text of a manuscript in his possession that is entitled "Essay on Alchemy by Sigismund Bacstrom, together with extracts from the great early Alchemists". The *Essay* opens with a brief preface (approximately 1400 words) to the fairly lengthy "Extracts". Unfortunately, these extracts are not provided with any page references indicative of the editions that Bacstrom used in the compilation of his anthology; but he has interposed some explanatory remarks "introduced", to quote his own words, "as helps to explain the passages in which they occur". It is clear that he must have been extremely well versed in the literature of alchemy; indeed, he emphasizes that "a slight cursory reading of a few of the Authors, who have written on this art, will not enable any inquirer to discover where harmony exists among them". His anthology is divided into five parts, illustrative of those texts that exemplify "the three principles or materials, the Furnace and Vessel, the work itself and signs which accompany it, and multiplication and transmutation".

As Mr. Hamilton-Jones has aptly pointed out in his introduction, this *Essay* (which is represented here under the title of "Bacstrom's Alchemical Anthology") was evidently designed along the lines of *Fasciculus Chemicus* by Arthur Dee, published by Elias Ashmole.

D. G.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Revue d'Histoire des Sciences et de leurs Applications. Tome XIII,
No. 3 (July-September), 1960. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
(Annual Subscription to Great Britain and the Commonwealth, 26s.)

This issue contains the following articles:—

Hâmid Dilgan: "Démonstration du Ve Postulat d'Euclide par Schams-ed-Din Samarkandi. Traduction de l'ouvrage Aschkâl-üt-teessis de Samarkandi".

Alexandre Koyné: "Le *De Motu Gravium* de Galilée. De l'expérience imaginaire, et de son abus".

Paul Chauchard: "A propos du Cinquantenaire de la Chronaxie: l'importance de l'œuvre de Louis Lapicque en Neurophysiologie".

There are sections headed "Documentation et Informations" and "Analyses d'Ouvrages".

The Beginning of the Royal Society. By Margery Purver and E. J. Bowen, F.R.S. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1960.

AUTHOR INDEX

	<i>Page</i>
Debus, Allen G. The Paracelsian Compromise in Elizabethan England	71
Gibbs, F. W. Dr. Johnson's First Published Work? .. .	24
" " Itinerant Lecturers in Natural Philosophy .. .	III
Horne, R. A. Atomism in Ancient Greece and India .. .	98
Kibre, Pearl. Two Alchemical Miscellanies: Vatican Latin MSS. 4091, 4092	167
Neville, Roy G. Unrecorded Daltoniana: Two Letters to John Bostock and a Prospectus to the "New System", 1808 .. .	42
Pagel, Walter. Paracelsus and the Neoplatonic and Gnostic Tradition	125
Sheppard, H. J. A Survey of Alchemical and Hermetic Symbolism ..	35
Thorndike, Lynn. De Lapidibus	6
" " Other Texts on Colours	53

SUBJECT INDEX

	<i>Page</i>
Alchemical Miscellanies, Two, by Pearl Kibre	167
Atomism, in Ancient Greece and India, by R. A. Horne	98
Colours, Other Texts on, by Lynn Thorndike	53
Daltoniana: Two unrecorded letters to John Bostock, and a Prospectus to the "New System", 1808, by R. G. Neville	42
De Lapidibus, by Lynn Thorndike	6
Johnson (Dr.), First Published Work ? of, by F. W. Gibbs	24
Lecturers, Itinerant, in Natural Philosophy, by F. W. Gibbs	III
Paracelsian Compromise in Elizabethan England, The, by A. G. Debus	71
Paracelsus and the Neoplatonic and Gnostic Tradition, by W. Pagel ..	125
Symbolism, A Survey of Alchemical and Hermetic, by H. J. Sheppard..	35